

don't put off till tomorrow

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by [Erbi](#)

Summary

“Hannie,” Minho exhales. “What did you see?”

And Jisung can't deny it anymore, not with Minho looking at him so openly, so sincerely waiting for his answer. Communicating to him that he's not going to judge him, that he's just going to accept whatever it is Jisung says.

With a single fragile breath, everything he's been keeping only to himself, the truth that's been terrorising him, floats in the space between them.

“I saw you die. Three times.”

or: Jisung's night of venting at a bar quickly spirals when he meets a beautiful stranger with orange hair who doesn't pull any punches. Unbeknownst to him, the spiral goes much further than he might have anticipated. And he may not be the only one affected.

Notes

Written for [MINSUNG FICATHON](#) for **PROMPT P196:**

jisung goes out drinking one night with friends and on his way back home minho runs into him asking him for help and claiming that someone is following him. jisung ignores minho's cries for help and goes home. the next day he wakes up and finds out that the man he had ignored the night before (minho) was murdered. feeling guilty, jisung sets out to discover anything he possibly can about minho (and maybe possibly solve the murder).

See the end of the work for [more notes](#)

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

Be sure to check notes at the end for any TWs. Stay safe! ♡

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

“No, it’s bullshit!” Jisung complains, slamming his glass on the table with a lot more force than necessary, what is left of his beer nearly spilling over the rim. Two pairs of steel chopsticks, his and Chan’s, haphazardly thrown into the huge bowl of tteokbokki in the centre of the table, rattle at the impact. Other patrons at the bar send disapproving looks their way but Jisung doesn’t seem to register them or simply doesn’t care.

“There’s nothing to change, it’s perfect the way it is, I’m not gonna change anything,” he declares with finality, body slumping against the back of his chair.

He knows he must be pouting, can feel it with how one of his cheeks puffs out against his will. He also knows Chan is about to give him the responsible-adult look, the one that precedes the responsible-adult talk, and maybe that’s why he stubbornly fixes his gaze on the few remaining rice cakes rather than look at his friend.

“What are you, fucking six or something?” Changbin, sitting on Jisung’s right, reprimands him before Chan has the chance to say anything. He’s not yelling but he sounds pissed for sure.

Changbin’s hand easily wraps around Jisung’s bicep, pulling him up in his chair a bit so he is forced to leave his sack of potatoes stance, and sit like a person instead.

“None of us is happy about it,” he continues, wildly gesticulating between all three of them with his chopsticks. “But we’re not gonna resolve it by being stubborn idiots” – this time, he points directly at Jisung – “and refusing to have a discussion about it, are we?”

Some of the tteokbokki sauce sticking to Changbin’s chopsticks flies off and lands near Jisung’s mouth; he feels his eye twitch.

“Changbin’s right,” Chan immediately chimes in, probably sensing the situation is about to get out of hand. He gently removes Changbin’s hand from around Jisung’s arm and wipes the sauce off of Jisung’s

face.

Jisung meets his eyes, making sure to school his features into a perfect scowl, which is not difficult considering he's ready to wring someone's neck.

"...But so are you," admits the eldest. "I... personally, I don't know what's the professor's problem either but--"

"He's a fucking dickbag who wouldn't know good music if it slapped him across his face, that's what's his--"

"Yah, Jisung-ah!"

"What!" Jisung shouts back, and this time he turns around to face Changbin directly. He already let go of his beer glass, but it doesn't stop him from hitting the table with his hand, to further drive home how little patience he has left. "I'm right and you know it too, you *both* do! Chan-hyung at least has the balls to admit it unlike you!"

Changbin's face reddens. He looks like he might physically shake some sense into Jisung, and that should probably scare him, but his mind has been so clouded by the alcohol and this entire fucking day that he couldn't give less of a fuck.

"You're gonna tell me anything about having balls? You? Who was it that nearly started crying as soon as the class ended, huh?"

And Jisung's eyes don't sting, and his lips don't wobble. They do *not*.

"Okay, guys, that's enough!" Chan almost never raises his voice so Jisung can feel the sentence pierce through his entire body. His head automatically whips to the side to look at his hyung. He is pretty sure Changbin does the exact same thing.

"Changbin, you stop yelling at Jisung because we all know you feel the same way. Hell, we all do! We were- we *are* proud of the track the way it is so why would we want to change anything."

Changbin lowers his head, Jisung can't help but feel a victorious smirk tug at the corner of his mouth.

"But" Chan carries on, his eyes moving from Changbin to Jisung. "As much as it sucks, if we want to pass this class, this *mandatory* class, we can't just put our foot down and refuse to listen to what the professor has to say. I'm sure he has a reason."

Jisung's gaze drops to the bowl of tteokbokki once again. He can no longer hold eye contact with his hyung, not when he knows Chan is right. It is a mandatory class and if they want to graduate and have a degree that would immensely help them with getting hired at any production company or even establishing their own, there is nothing they can do about it.

The thing is, they were given four weeks to come up with an original three-minute to four-minute track for their R&B Composition class, which is nothing new since that's how that class has worked ever since the beginning of Jisung's second year this March.

Chan, who is now in his last year of undergrad, and Changbin, a year ahead of Jisung, even both waited for Jisung to become a second-year student so they could take the class together. If Jisung wanted to be mean about it, he could point out how Chan is dead bent on changing their perfect track just to please the professor so he can smoothly graduate since it's his last year. But he won't do that, he is a different person now than he was as a highschooler.

They never had any problems in this class, they always worked together, always submitted their tracks within the deadline, and the professor never had any complaints. Until today.

Truth be told, Jisung mostly zoned out after the professor had said they had to change the track, so he can't really testify to what was really said or what was the complaint about, but it certainly ruined his day, even if he didn't hear most of it. His consciousness resurfaced when Chan had suggested having a conversation over some beer and food so they could figure out what to do. The beer part caught Jisung's attention, and he was pretty certain if he were to spend the night by himself, he would most likely spend it dissociating curled up in his bed, so he agreed. Changbin didn't need much convincing. And that's how they found themselves in this predicament.

"Okay," Chan breathes out. "Now that we've calmed down, apologise to each other," he says, leaving no room for debate.

Jisung's still not fond of this part. There is something inside him that wants to continue arguing to prove his point, but there are also many hurtful words at the very tip of his tongue, that have perhaps washed up with the alcohol's help, and he knows it wouldn't end well. It never ended well back then when he was still full of anger and poison that both Chan and Changbin ended up being the targets of more often than not. Goddamn it, it is a miracle they are still his friends.

Jisung carefully looks at Changbin who already looks a little sheepish. He swallows the ugliness bubbling up in his throat.

“I’m sorry,” he murmurs quietly.

Changbin looks at him from under his lashes, as if expecting him to continue.

Jisung quickly flicks his gaze to Chan who only raises his eyebrows and widens his eyes to telepathically spur Jisung on.

“I’m sorry I said you don’t have balls,” Jisung mumbles, he hears Chan choke on his beer. “I mean, you clearly do, I’ve seen them,” he says, jerking his head a little in the direction of Changbin’s crotch.

Changbin scoffs beside him, but it doesn’t sound mean.

“Aish, this little...” He cuts himself off when Jisung looks at him, their eyes meeting for the first time outside of their shouting match.

Changbin holds his gaze, Jisung doesn’t know what he sees in it but whatever it is, it makes his facial muscles soften.

“Sorry I brought up your crying,” Changbin says guiltily. There is a moment of silence and then Jisung notices Changbin’s eyes twitching in Chan’s direction. “Sorry I brought up your...,” Changbin’s squinting as if he is trying to decipher whatever Chan is trying to convey with his face.

Jisung feels a genuine smile pull at his lips.

“Sorry I brought up- I... ridiculed your... emotional insta-“

And at this point, Jisung just bursts out laughing. He guesses in Chan’s eyes he will always be the volatile kid who took offense at his emotions being merely mentioned. Maybe, back in the day, it would make him angry, but now, it’s somewhat heart-warming.

“Yah, Chanie-hyung,” Jisung lets his laugh carry through his words, turning towards their designated leader. “Didn’t you say we should apologise to each other? Why are you helping Changbin-hyung with his apology, huh? What’s sincere about that?”

Chan actually pales at that and before he can start stammering his way through an explanation Jisung turns to Changbin.

“It’s okay,” he sniffs. “I mean... you’ve seen it, too... a lot,” Jisung

adds, self-deprecatingly. It took him a long time, but he is at a point where he can admit he cries pretty frequently, pretty easily too.

“And there’s nothing wrong with that!” Chan once again jumps to his rescue, ready to defend Jisung’s emotions when Jisung wouldn’t defend them himself.

Jisung picks up his chopsticks and reaches for one of the last rice cakes in their bowl.

“Yeah,” he addresses Changbin. “Take it from the man who would rather die than have his two best friends see him crying, and god forbid comfort him.”

Changbin tries to hide his laugh behind his hand, but it bursts out of him. Without realising, Jisung joins him.

Chan rests his chin on his hand, but Jisung has a sneaking suspicion it is just an attempt to cover how red his face is.

“I’m the oldest...” Chan mumbles in his defence.

Of course, it’s not Chan’s fault he has a hard time expressing his less-desirable emotions in front of his dongsaengs and Jisung is not making fun of him for it, but it is a little absurd for a guy who encourages everyone around him to feel their authentic feelings, to hide his own.

“And we’ve told you over and over again that we don’t give a shit about that,” Changbin explains, and Jisung resolutely nods.

Chan refuses to look at them. He blindly reaches with his chopsticks for some rice cakes to distract himself with, only to ultimately come up empty. He blinks at the bowl as if it betrayed him.

“Do... Do you guys want another-“ Jisung notices how Chan’s voice seems to strain a little when he tries to speak. He can’t really dwell on it, though, because Changbin apparently decides to flex his impressive vocal cords, and completely drown Chan out.

“Yah, what does a guy have to do in here to get another bowl of tteokbokki!” He yells, already gripping the edge of the bowl, ready to stand up and go ask for a second helping.

He pointedly looks down at Chan. “You stay here and let me take care of it, understand?” He is playful in his demand but at the same time, there is no doubt he is serious.

Chan doesn't protest, and as Changbin wanders off with the empty bowl, Chan sends Jisung a nervous smile.

Fuck. Did Jisung hit a sore spot with what he said about Chan hiding his emotions? He and his stupid fucking mouth. It's clear as a day Chan doesn't feel entirely comfortable, he looks like he is trying to regain his footing.

Jisung wants to take a sip of his beer to numb out whatever he is feeling, but he finds his glass is just as empty as the tteokbokki bowl.

"Shit," he curses softly under his breath.

"Do you want another glass?" Chan asks eagerly.

When Jisung looks at him, Chan's eyes are sparkling, his smile slightly shaky yet determined. It's also surprising he hasn't told Jisung to stop drinking yet but Jisung's not gonna remind him voluntarily.

"Uh, yeah, but--"

"It's okay!" Chan cuts him off, already taking hold of Jisung's glass. "I'll bring you another, yeah?"

"O...kay, hyung? But you don't have to," Jisung tries.

"S okay, I want to, yeah?" Chan answers, sending Jisung a brief smile before he leaves with his glass in the direction of where the tap is.

Jisung realises, as he watches his hyung go, that's it, isn't it? Chan wants to. That's him trying to regain his footing. Rather than admitting Jisung's comment made him even the slightest bit uncomfortable, he does something nice for him instead.

Left alone at their table with nothing to drink or eat and after possibly sending one of his two closest friends spiralling, Jisung feels out of place. He works hard on being a good friend, a decent person, someone at least remotely pleasant to be around, but sometimes it feels like there is this impenetrable barrier that separates him from others. Why does he still say hurtful shit he doesn't mean? Why can't he be more like Chan? Someone kind and caring. Or more like Changbin who is so loud and assertive with his emotions that there can't ever be a misunderstanding with him.

He goes to pull up his phone to mindlessly scroll through some of his – mostly dead – socials when something catches his attention in the

corner of his eye.

The bar isn't too big, but it's quite packed. Almost every stool is occupied, as are the tables, Jisung belatedly realises it should make him anxious but the buzz of alcohol in his veins reminds him to calm down.

Still, his mouth dries out and his heartbeat kicks up when his swimming vision comes across the scene at the bar stool close to the entrance door. Jisung's mind has yet to make sense of what he is seeing but his body immediately knows it's going to be sent into panic over it.

There is a person sitting on the bar stool, their face obscured with strands of ginger, or rather orange hair, head cast down. They seem to be grasping what looks like a shot glass with their left hand, a glass bottle next to them. Jisung can't tell how full or empty the bottle is. The most disturbing thing though, the thing that's probably sped up Jisung's heart without his volition, is that there is another person, more accurately a broad man standing next to the sitting person, his hand on their shoulder.

Okay, he is probably just hitting on them. That's normal at a bar, right? What's actually disturbing is Jisung watching two people flirt.

He's about to reach into his pocket for his iPhone again but then he hears a creaking sound. He looks back up, trying to be inconspicuous about it.

The broad guy has sat on the stool next to the person with orange hair, his hand now creeping along the back of their neck. He seems to be telling them something, but the person doesn't seem too interested; they don't look at him, maybe don't even listen to him.

Then, the sitting person lifts their head, and when they turn to the broad guy, Jisung thinks he catches a glimpse of a very sharp nose. It looks like they are having a short conversation with the man. Jisung doesn't know why he is so invested, but he leans to the side to take a better look at the person's face. That's when, for whatever inexplicable reason, his gaze drops to the bar table, and he sees a pill held in the broad guy's hand in dangerous proximity of the shot glass of the orange-haired person.

Jisung takes a stuttering breath but before he even manages to breathe out, the pill is let go of and Jisung watches it drop into the glass in slow motion. Both Jisung's heart and stomach jump to his throat, the

world speeds up again, the pill dissolving in the clear alcohol within seconds.

Jisung... has to do something. He has to do something! He has to do something, right? He... He can't just watch this unfold before his eyes! He feels his chest rapidly rising and falling, his mouth is like a desert, he is sure he would suffocate if he tried to so much as swallow, the air he tries to fill his lungs with seems to escape him before it can properly settle. He wants to push his chair away from the table and stand up, but when he tries to do that, his legs don't possess enough strength to let him push the chair, let alone stand up, God forbid walk.

Chan and Changbin! They would know what to do, right? They would walk up there and take care of the situation, right? Jisung feels his eyes sting, and something like disgust curls up in his guts. He always relies on his hyungs, can't do anything on his own, and then insults them without meaning to because he is such a fucking idiot. Such a weak fucking idiot who can't do anything.

His throat closes up and he feels like he might throw up. Thankfully, his brain hasn't completely failed him because it sends a signal to his body to vacate this place as soon as possible so he doesn't have to withstand the absolute mortification of throwing up in the middle of a room filled with people, and Jisung actually pushes the chair away from the table, his fingers catching a shaky hold at the edge of it.

There is a sharp sound that rattles Jisung to his core. At first, he assumes he stood up so quickly he knocked down his chair in the process.

"Get the fuck away from me, now!" The voice is so raw and scratched with emotion it momentarily silences all other sensations mixing inside Jisung's head and body.

The bar stool where the orange-haired person sat now lies on the floor, still wobbling a little with the momentum. A man with orange hair, sharp nose, and pure aversion carved into his face stands next to it, one arm lifted towards the broad man, who is at least a head taller. The shot glass, which the man with orange hair is grasping in his fingers, is empty, its' content most likely in the other guy's face.

"Are you fucking deaf?!" The shorter man continues. Jisung doesn't register where the shot glass ends, but suddenly the taller guy is yanked by his collar to the shorter man's level, Jisung notices how the orange-hair man has to stand on his tiptoes. It doesn't make him any

less intimidating, though.

“Go before I help you,” he threatens, still loud enough for the rest of the bar to hear, and then he lifts his foot and honest-to-God kicks the guy towards the entrance, harshly letting go of his collar in the process so he collides with the door.

“Oh my gosh-”

Jisung turns over his shoulder and is surprised to see both his friends back with more food and his glass of beer, their eyes fixed where Jisung’s are.

“What the hell happened?” Changbin echoes Chan’s shock.

“Uh...” Jisung starts eloquently. He is interrupted by a sharp intake of breath, bordering on an unsuccessfully restrained sob.

The man who just literally kicked out the creep that most likely wanted to drug him turns back towards the bar table, not bothering with picking the stool back up. He locks his fingers in his hair like he wants to pull the strands out, and it doesn’t take a genius to figure out the almost-sob came from him, especially not when Jisung sees how tightly he’s clenching his jaw.

“We should...”

“Yeah, let’s...”

Chan and Changbin apparently telepathically finish each other’s sentences when Jisung notices they’ve both already got one foot in front of them to go check on the man. Because that’s what they’re like. Kind, caring, assertive. If only Jisung could be like that, too...

In the spur of the moment, Jisung stretches his arm in front of them to stop them in their tracks. He... he is the one who witnessed this from the beginning. Yes, he froze, but the least he can do is make sure the man who could potentially end up drugged tonight is okay. Maybe he is being selfish again, maybe he is trying to cleanse his karma, tilt the scales of fate to his side, or whatever, there is just something that tells him he should approach this person.

With his legs shaking, Jisung carefully makes his way to him. Now, he seems almost crumpled at the bar table, as if the confrontation with the broad guy took everything out of him.

He doesn't seem to notice Jisung even when there is half a metre separating them at most.

Okay, Jisung thinks, try not to think about how you could very well be the next guy that ends up being kicked out of the door. Here goes nothing.

"A-Are you," Jisung's voice catches in his throat, probably a collaborative fault of the alcohol and his nerves going haywire at an interaction with a stranger. "Are you... okay?" He asks, timid.

As if time has been chopped up into individual frames, the man with orange hair slowly turns his face to look at Jisung, his head tilted.

He looks... no, he *is* abnormally beautiful.

The orange hair parted almost but not quite in the middle, frames his face – the perfect mixture of sharp and soft features. Some strands fall in his feline-like eyes, they look so, so tired, exhausted, it might be Jisung's mind playing tricks on him, but he thinks they are a little red too. His eyes are brown, so dark they almost seem to absorb the light. When he blinks, his long lashes brush against his sharp cheekbones. His nose really is sharp, and it looks like there is a little mole on the left side of it. The man's lips are set in a perfectly straight line, and somehow it makes Jisung's heart race with a reluctant anticipation. In his 23 years of life, he has never seen a person look so hauntingly gorgeous when pissed.

The man's lips stretch into a condescending smirk. Jisung feels a shiver run down his spine.

"Do I look okay to you?" He asks, his voice surprisingly soft now that he's not yelling his lungs out with anger.

What is Jisung supposed to say to that? If he says yes, then it doesn't make sense to ask him in the first place, plus it would be a blatant lie. But if he says no... wouldn't it be like he is assuming how this man feels? It feels oddly invasive to just say no.

The man clicks his tongue, already losing interest.

"No, I-" Jisung's mouth opens before he grants it permission to do so. Fuck, fuck! What is he supposed to say? His palms are sweating, his heart hammering against his ribcage. "I just wanted to..."

"Wanted to what," the beautiful man says, his brows furrowed, eyes

boring at Jisung's now. It sounds like he's running out of patience. "Wanted to play hero now that the danger's been eliminated? Do you think I didn't notice you?"

The guy seems to slowly rise to his full height with each word out of his lips. Jisung can't help but take a step back, letting the man invade his personal space. He is a few inches taller than Jisung.

"You saw when he slipped that shit in my drink, and you just watched and did nothing like the rest of this fucking bar and now you ask me if I'm okay?"

Jisung can't do anything except watch this man expose how much of a fucking coward Jisung is. There is nothing he can say in his defence because it's the truth. He is afraid to even blink, it would probably be enough to send the water building behind his eyes cascading down his cheeks. He keeps his mouth tightly shut, too. Scared what sort of sounds would emerge if he opened it.

"So yes, I'm okay, because I took care of it myself," the man continues to seethe, albeit less loudly. "If your definition of 'okay' is not overdosed and dead in a ditch, then I'm perfectly fucking dandy. Anything else you wanted?"

If looks could kill, Jisung would be definitely bleeding out on the floor by now. He tries to stop the invisible shakes paralysing his entire body, and goes to shake his head instead so he can end this absolutely tragic confrontation as soon as possible.

"Hey, he was just worried about you, no need to be such an asshole about it," this time it's Changbin who defends Jisung when he, yet again, can't do it himself. Chan's hand soothingly strokes at Jisung's shoulder, as if he deserves it.

"I didn't ask for his fucking worries!" The orange-haired guy shouts again, scowling down his nose at Changbin. Jisung wonders if he ever smiles.

"Come on, man, he just wanted to help you, yeah?" Chan tries.

"I didn't ask for his help either!"

"And he didn't ask for you blowing up on him like that over a simple fucking question!" Changbin argues back, not nearly as patient as Chan.

Jisung doesn't like this at all, two people shouting because of him, and Chan getting involved too. If he hadn't opened his mouth in the first place, this entire situation could have been avoided.

"Tough-fucking-luck," the guy hisses through his teeth, voice cracking in the middle, his eyes seem to glaze over for a second. He then turns away, shoving his hand inside the pocket of his grey sweatpants to throw some money on the table to pay for his drinks, Jisung assumes.

"Fucking asshole," Changbin murmurs for no one but himself to hear.

Jisung doesn't understand how it got so out of hand. Changbin is pissed off, the guy is pissed off plus it also looks like he is a few seconds away from breaking down. Jisung feels immense guilt wrap around his throat.

"I-I'm sorry..." he squeaks out, doesn't know what he wants to achieve with it, but it feels appropriate to say.

The man seems to be already leaving but he turns on his heel. He stalks up to Jisung, looks at him with his glassy eyes, with exhaustion and utter distaste. It's like he's measuring Jisung's entire existence.

"Look at you," he scoffs. "You should help yourself first before you try to be a hero for anyone else," he spits out his final verdict, leaving Jisung utterly stunned, hurtful words he could shout back once more burning his tongue.

The guy is in no better state than Jisung himself to be this condescending about it. He looks about ready to crumble. But the possible insults stewing in the alcohol in Jisung's blood, the anger bubbling beneath his skin, beneath the learned apologies, stays thankfully locked up behind the shock holding his entire body hostage.

He can only watch as the man leaves. When the bar's door shuts behind him with an unnecessarily loud slam that's when Jisung's consciousness gets pulled back into reality. The reality of all the other customers watching them, of being the unwanted centre of attention.

Jisung doesn't understand what he's feeling. It's stress, anger, exhaustion, concern, worry, so many emotions and none of them positive. If he could, he would grab the notebook he writes his lyrics in, scribble down so many until the pounding in his head subsides. But his notebook is in the backpack at their table, so far away, and he's afraid if he tried to write now, the tip of his ballpen would tear

through the paper, he would damage the notebook, just like he damages everything else.

The only outlet left for the confusing sensations inside him is physical. And so, he hears himself shakily gasp for breath once, twice before the tears finally spill over, and Jisung starts crying.

Chan and Changbin gently lead him somewhere, probably to the bathroom, and Jisung follows them on unsteady legs, trying and failing to get his breathing under control.

The rest of the night at the bar is a blur. A blur of pieces of his surroundings obscured by salty water, of his friends' gentle voices, of the memory of the man's beautiful face, and the justified words he spat at Jisung.



By the time Jisung's sitting at the small table at the vacated convenience store near his apartment, slurping his mild ramyun noodles, he has no idea how long it's been since they left the bar, since he convinced both Chan and Changbin he'll be fine on his own, and set on his merry way. In all honesty, he just wanted to be alone. Plus, he had already inconvenienced them both enough tonight.

He allowed his friends to call him an Uber and wait with him until the car arrived, once inside, he asked the driver if he wouldn't mind pulling off in front of the convenience store. Jisung's not a stranger to drinking, going with Chan and Changbin to bars and pubs pretty often, and throughout the years he found ramyun for whatever reason helps him with his hangover the next morning, and with keeping everything he digested today down the remainder of the night.

He guesses it's not morning yet because it's still dark outside. He lives in Seoul but there is no way in hell he could afford an apartment close to the city centre with all the flashing lights that never turn off, so in this secluded area where his shoe-box apartment is, the only light at the street at this time of the night comes from the convenience store's banners right in front of the automatic door.

Chewing on another portion of his noodles, Jisung's mind wanders to the scene at the bar. He desperately wishes to forget it, forget what the stranger with orange hair told him, but he just can't. One would think his mind would be completely blank at this point, but it's like the panic partially cleared his mind but left it in a haze at the same time, so he can't stop thinking and he also can't make sense of what

he's thinking.

Look at you, you should help yourself first constantly echoes in his mind and the sorry state he is in right now doesn't help one bit.

What has Jisung achieved really? He's sitting at a convenience store table, the only company around him are two other drunks in various stages of being awake, the only meal he can stomach is pre-packaged instant noodles. And all of this after he bawled his eyes out like a fucking baby in front of God-knows-how-many people. Once he eats the noodles, he's going to wobble to his small, messy, crumbling apartment to pass out on the bed without changing his clothes that stink like cheap beer, then he's going to wake up with a fucking headache and the most disgusting taste in his dry mouth and he's going to drag himself to the university through the overcrowded streets, trying to keep his breathing stable, only to sit down and listen to his professor bitch about his track that he'll inevitably have to change to fucking graduate.

He knows his life fucking sucks, okay? But he doesn't need to be reminded about it, he doesn't need to know that his existence is pitiful even to complete strangers at bars who have most likely downed half a bottle of vodka, if he had to guess what the transparent alcohol in the guy's shot glass was.

He finishes his bowl of noodles, his stomach swaying back and forth when he stands back up. He throws his backpack over his shoulder, throwing the paper bowl away in the trashcan near the entrance. He doesn't bother saying goodbye to the person at the cash register. At late night, there is this silent agreement of avoidance automatically shared by whoever is inside the convenience store, that's part of why it's one of the few public places Jisung doesn't mind eating at.

The chilly October wind outside makes him pull up his scarf closer to his nose. He quickly checks the time on his phone screen, but when he finds out he can't make out the numbers and he collides with the banner outside of the store, he understands he must be too drunk or just too out of it, to try and get his bearings.

His legs are still unsteady, and the entire world seems to tilt both right and left when he tries to look ahead, so he ends up stabbing his gaze to the ground instead, he knows he can walk the route from the convenience store to his apartment building with his eyes closed.

The utter silence surrounding Jisung is interrupted by something that

sounds like quickly approaching footsteps, the interval between each sound is alarmingly short, like someone's running. It should probably make him worry but his mind is so far gone the concept of worry doesn't transfer into a physical response.

Then something grabs at Jisung's shoulder, the sloshing contents inside his stomach the only thing that lets him know his body is being turned against his will.

Someone is panting, wheezing very close to him, they sound out of breath, and the sound of footsteps has stopped.

Jisung's eyelids do not want to cooperate with him, his vision blurry, obscured by both his lashes and some unidentifiable moisture. He tries to squint, to blink it away, he distantly recognises there is something, someone in front of him, that's where the pressure on his shoulder probably comes from. The person seems to be made of blacks and greys. And vibrant orange.

Look at you, you should help yourself first resonates through Jisung's ears filled with cotton... Or are they? The person is opening his mouth, isn't he? He? Yes, he. Is he talking to Jisung? Belittling him again? Once wasn't enough?

Suddenly, the hold he has on Jisung's shoulder burns through him. Jisung shakes him off, and he regrets he's so far gone he can't properly see the no doubt miserable expression on the stranger's face when he stumbles over his feet, falling to the cold pavement, looking possibly even more pathetic than Jisung feels right now.

"You should... help yourself... first..." Jisung thinks bitterly, measuring the most definitely shaken man with his eyes. With the alcohol numbing his brain, it feels good to look at the same guy who mortified him in front of his friends, in front of tons of other strangers.

The stranger, crumpled on the floor, tries to open his mouth but Jisung doesn't feel like indulging him or himself anymore. He has an apartment to get back to, his eyes already closing, give it one or two minutes and he will be practically dead on his feet.

Jisung turns around, swallowing down the bile rising in his throat. After an unspecified amount of time, he reaches his front door. Fishing for his key in the pockets of his jacket, he blames it on the ringing in his ears when something resembling a "...lp me!" pierces through the slowly waking-up Seoul.

What's the worst part about waking up with a hangover? The nausea? The pounding headache? The sensitivity to all sounds and smells? Or maybe the god-awful-smelling breath? For Jisung, it is how dry his mouth is. He likes alcohol, even though he is kind of a lightweight, but he absolutely detests the dry patches on his palette the next morning, how it feels like he could almost peel them off, or they could peel off on their own, get wedged in his equally dry throat and suffocate him and-

Okay, woah. This doesn't seem too good; the day has barely begun and his mind's already conjuring up scenarios of his inevitable death.

Jisung swallows against the disgusting feeling of sand in his mouth, and the aftertaste of beer he forgot to brush away when he stumbled inside his apartment last night. God, what time was it when he came home? He thinks the sun still wasn't up at the very least.

Come to think of it, what time is it now?

He tries to unstick his eyelids glued together with sleep crusts, blindly grabbing for his phone.

9:30.

...Fuck! His first Friday class begins at 10:20, and he has already missed it two times! One more and he is done for.

Propelled forward by the sheer terror of being late for the class, Jisung quickly rearranges his limbs to something resembling an upright position. He is immediately reminded of his hangover when a stabbing pain pulses through his head. So much for better hangovers after a bowl of ramyun.

Oh, that's right, he did stop by the convenience store before he came back home, didn't he?

Jisung takes a look at what he's wearing, it's the same clothes he had on yesterday, they must still smell like the bar...

Oh yeah, he went to a bar with Chan and Changbin because...

Jisung feels his eye twitch, it's all coming back to him. The professor refusing their track, going to the bar with his hyungs, fighting with Changbin, fighting with the... the beautiful stranger, eating his

ramyun at the convenience store, running into the beautiful stranger outside of the convenience store.

Wait. That... doesn't seem right, right? There was definitely some time gap between when they left the bar and when Jisung left the convenience store. The guy with orange hair wouldn't be there. It makes zero sense. What, would he follow Jisung home? Or not even home but to the convenience store close to his home? When he more than indicated he doesn't want Jisung in his proximity?

Yeah, no, that's bullshit. Jisung's drunk mind played tricks on him again, like that one time it convinced him to place an online order for hundred frozen cheesecakes.

He vaguely recalls the guy said something to him at the bar. Something that triggered their entire argument, but what was the argument even about?

Jisung's phone buzzes in his hand and it startles him enough to shake off whatever fragmented memories he's trying to piece together. He switches on his screen, notices 20 missed calls from 'Channie-hyung' and 5 from 'Changbinnie-hyung', some text messages, too. What catches his attention the most, though, is the time – 9:37.

Fucking hell, he really has to step on the gas if he wants to make it in time.

Jisung starts stumbling his way through his apartment, attempting to perform his typical morning routine at record speed; brush his teeth, wash his face, take his pills, he has to change his clothes, can't walk into the lecture smelling like a fucking bar. He haphazardly throws the contents of his closet on his bedroom floor, finally deciding on some basic jeans and a long-sleeved shirt he can throw his hoodie over. He doesn't have the time to shave so a little stubble is what he's working with today.

He grabs a plain fucking toast from his pantry, the last piece left. There is no time to stuff it into the toaster or slap some butter on it, he just needs something to stuff his cheeks with on his run to uni. He hides his morning head with a black beanie, makes sure his phone is in his pocket, and runs out of his apartment with his Converse still half untied.

His university is approximately half an hour by train, so Jisung rushes to the underground with the entire bread stuffed in his mouth. He almost chokes when he attempts to swallow it down right before the

train comes.

When he finally sits down on the train, he is trying to catch his breath so vehemently that the person sitting next to him changes seats.

After he shoots a quick message to Chan and Changbin, letting them know he has survived the night and is on his way to school, he allows himself to relax as much as possible in the rather uncomfortable seat, slumping against the backrest and putting his earbuds in.

He scrolls through his notification bar, finding Spotify, pressing play on whatever track he was listening to last time.

Just when he's ready to switch off his phone screen and spend the ride to the university dozing off, another notification catches his attention.

BREAKING: Body of university student (M 25) found in Gangbuk District

Jisung breaks out in cold sweat, the hand he's holding his phone in starts shaking so badly he has to support it with his other. His throat is once again completely parched, an uncomfortable tension squeezing his stomach.

There... there was a murder in his neighbourhood?

Wait, does it... does it have to be a murder? It says only 'body found' that doesn't necessarily mean murder, or does it?

He knows there is no way out now. If he ignores the article, he will end up thinking about it the whole day, if he reads it, it will be the exact same. He should have never seen the fucking headline in the first place. Fuck.

Curiosity killed the cat and Jisung hopes it won't kill Han Jisung next when he clicks on the notification. His browser opens with the article from one of the Seoul news websites. With bated breath, he begins to read.

BREAKING: Body of university student (M 25) found in Gangbuk District

On Friday 13, local authorities reported finding a body of a male university student in Suyu-dong, one of the neighbourhoods in Gangbuk District, Seoul. The young man has been identified as 25-year-old Lee M.

According to the coroner, the victim suffered a fatal stab wound to the abdomen, and bled out almost instantly. All indications point to a murder; however, no stabbing weapon was found near the body.

The police declined to release further details about the condition of the body or about the crime scene.

The case will be transferred to the SMPA.

The whole world is blurring before Jisung's eyes, he can barely make out the letters by the end of the article, his heart is beating in his throat, he can feel it's mere seconds away from jumping out of his body.

Yes, the neighbourhood he lives in is cheap, but a murder? Insanely enough, he almost wants to laugh. Has his life turned into an investigation drama? What... what the fuck is this supposed to mean? As if he didn't have enough on his plate already, the cherry on top turns out to be a fucking murder almost right outside of his apartment.

Oh god. Oh god, what if it really was right outside of his apartment? What if there is a murderer running around the building where Jisung lives?

Jisung scrolls through the rest of the article, doesn't bother reading it anymore, his hands are so sweaty he can barely hold his phone. The fabric of his shirt and hoodie suddenly feels so oppressive against his chest, compressing his lungs, his airflow. Jisung looks frantically around, realises the train is in motion now, he can't run away, he can't get out. God, where would he fucking run even? How would it help? There is no escaping what he knows now.

He attempts to switch his screen off for good, if he can't see it then maybe... maybe he won't think about it. That's when he sees the picture at the very bottom of the article.

The orange hair parted almost but not quite in the middle frames his face – the perfect mixture of sharp and soft features. Some strands fall in his feline-like eyes. His eyes are dark brown, so dark they almost seem to absorb the light. His nose sharp, a little mole at the left side of it. Lips set in a perfectly straight line.

And Jisung remembers.

The hand on his shoulder last night, the panic in the eyes he could barely make out with how fuzzy his mind was. The orange hair. He remembers shaking him off, looking down on him, talking to him.

You should help yourself first.

...lp me!

Help me!

Jisung jumps to his feet, distantly registers his phone crashing against the train floor. People are no doubt looking at him, no doubt thinking he has lost his mind, and they would be right.

He has to – fuck – he has to fucking run away. He has to run away! Has to run away! But the train is still moving, the door is shut.

He doesn't know how, he was in his seat a moment ago, but now he is banging his fists against the door with all the strength he can muster, his throat scratched raw, he wants to- he *needs* to get out! Out! Out! Please! Please! *Let me out, please!*

His surroundings spin one last time. Then, everything turns blissfully black.



Jisung startles awake with the inhale of a drowning man in his bed, his forehead streaked with beads of sweat dripping into his eyes. He's trying to breathe in as much air as humanly possible. Logically, he knows he is awake, but he still can't begin to take in the reality around him, his eyes open but not really seeing anything.

Finally, he swallows, throws his head back, ignoring the crack he hears from his neck. Letting his hands support the weight of his body, he tries to silently make sense of what he just experienced.

That was possibly the most vivid nightmare he's ever had. Part of him, or rather most of him wants to curl up in the bed, hide beneath his blanket, allow the tremors to shake through his body while he cries his eyes out but... what good would that do? He will only end up psyching himself out completely and that's the last thing he needs in this state.

Plus, he still has to attend the class if he wants the professor to let him write the final exam, existential crisis over being the cause of someone

else's murder be damned.

Jisung doesn't know how his self from the last night managed to get undressed and throw on his sleeping t-shirt, but he mentally sends it his thanks because this means he doesn't have to peel off all the layers he had on at the bar, namely his skinny jeans.

He feels weird when he pops out his anti-depressants and anti-anxiety pills because he can't shake off the feeling he already took them, but he doesn't let it bother him.

Right, he should probably message Chan and Changbin too, let them know he'll be on his way to school in a bit.

He reaches for his phone on his bedside table.

Only two missed calls from Chan and zero from Changbin, also only one text message from Chan.

Jisung scratches his head. It was quite late last night when they parted ways so maybe they made it home and fell asleep immediately without attempting to check on him.

He clicks on the text message and scans his fingerprint to access his phone.

8:15 AM *Channie-Hyung*

You coming? Today is the big day haha!

Jisung doesn't really know what Chan means but he has long given up on trying to figure him out. He replies with a simple *'be there in 10:10'* before he turns his screen off.

The digital clock next to his bed lets him know it's only 9:00. Would you look at that, he doesn't even have to rush to get to uni. Maybe it was one of those dreams where you oversleep because you are actually afraid to oversleep in real life? Well, there is no point dwelling on it now.

Before Jisung starts looking for some clothes to wear amidst the articles in his closet and on his bedroom floor, he does one last thing. Call him crazy, but he switches his phone screen on, opens the browser, and types in the headline he remembers from his nightmare.

No articles show up.

Breathing out a sigh of relief, he starts his morning routine. He brushes his teeth, dresses up, eats two toasts for breakfast, making a mental note to buy a new loaf on his way home today, and he leaves his apartment at exactly 9:30



Jisung's been studying at the university for almost two whole years now and yet he still manages to get lost whenever he's trying to find a particular building at the campus or a particular classroom in a building. He must have messed up this time somehow because there is literally no one else around the classroom except him when he makes it there five minutes before the lecture is supposed to start.

Normally, there are already people waiting by the time Jisung comes running to the classroom. And okay, even if other people somehow disappeared, then Chan would definitely be here. For some incomprehensible responsibility-reasons, Chan is early to every class by at least 15 minutes. Did something happen to him?

Chewing on his nails, Jisung fishes out his iPhone, ready to text Chan, or even call him at this point, when he finds Chan's already reached out to him, several times. Changbin hasn't. Which, Jisung came to understand, means his hyungs are together, and Chan has taken on the role of the designated Jisung-whisperer.

10:10 AM Channie-Hyung

Are you here yet?

10:12 AM

Han-ah?

10:13 AM

We are waiting in front of the studio.

10:14 AM

Where are you?

10:15 AM

We are thinking about dropping by the café after the sess, let's get some Americano, yeah? :)

??? Jisung

10:16 AM

Han, you're scaring me...

10:19 AM

Are you okay??

They are waiting in front of the studio? In front of what studio? Aren't they supposed to have the Music History class now? The one for masters' students they sneaked their way into, and the professor couldn't say no to them? Is there some special class at a studio today?

10:20 AM Me:

wdym studio??? where???

10:20 AM Channie-Hyung:

?? The studio for our R&B Composition, building 10, room 024.

Are you sure you're okay, Jisung-ah?

Jisung blinks at the screen as if it grew two heads, or, he supposes, one head, since for a screen that would be weird enough.

What does Chan mean R&B Composition? That was yesterday, no? When their professor told them off for their track, that's what started this whole chain of bizarre events. Isn't their first class on Friday Music History, or was there a change in the schedule that Jisung is not aware of? He didn't check his university email in the morning, so that could be it.

Jisung swallows past the lump in his throat. He's still staring at his messages with Chan. The time is 10:24, his status bar says. The class must have already started. Be it Music History or R&B Composition, they both fall to the second period.

There is a tic in his fingers, something in his head is nudging him to do it, to switch off his phone screen, then switch it back on...

Jisung switches the screen off, and when he turns it back on, the date *Thur, Oct 12* stares back at him with finality.

He blinks, slowly at first, then rapidly, maybe hoping the text will take a hint and magically change.

This can't be right, right? Jisung knows for certain Thursday was yesterday.

Maybe... maybe he accidentally changed the date on his phone?

Yeah... He changed the date on his phone, there was a change in the day schedule, and that's why they're having R&B Composition on Friday instead of Music History. That... actually makes sense.

Still, there is something nagging on Jisung's consciousness. Something that doesn't want to let him believe whatever story he has fabricated for the day magically switching to yesterday.

Momentarily forgetting about having to get to the studio to Chan and Changbin, he stays in the same spot, opens his browser, and quickly types in: *What is the date today?*

Thursday, October 12, 2023

Jisung chuckles.

He's fucked something up, hasn't he?

When he opens the door to the studio in room 024, he's clinging to the last bit of hope that this is all a misunderstanding. A misunderstanding or another extremely vivid dream, even though he has pinched himself at least 20 times on his way here and had to suppress yelps of pain every time.

The studio is fairly small, when the professor consults them about their tracks, he likes to do it individually so it's entirely possible it will be just them three with the professor, that's actually how it was yesterday, if Jisung remembers correctly. The clearest memory he has is the professor criticising their track, everything's a little blurry after that.

Chan and Changbin are already sitting on the couch in front of the wall opposite the equipment and the mixing console their professor is leaning against. Their track pulled up on his laptop. They both look in Jisung's direction when he sheepishly enters with an apologetic bow.

"Han," the professor says, gesturing with his hand to the couch where his hyungs scoot over to make room for him. "Take a seat, please."

Jisung sits on the couch, still feeling like he's moving through the motions because he swears to God he has experienced this almost exact same situation before. And not in the sense that he's been in this studio with Chan and Changbin to listen to their professor's feedback. In the sense that he lived through exactly this already, namely yesterday, the professor will most likely criticise their track in a few minutes, and Chan and Changbin most likely have no idea it's coming.

Jisung moves his backpack to his lap, hugging it. He feels the urge to look around the room, it's like nothing around him is real, like everything could disappear in a poof and turn into Friday, October 13, the way it's supposed to.

Changbin nudges him with his shoulder. He must be more fidgety than usual.

"You're late!" Changbin whisper-yells. "Fucking late on the day we receive the feedback of all days!"

This... Jisung doesn't think Changbin talked to him like this yesterday when they were at this very studio. But Jisung wasn't late yesterday. That's probably why.

“...sorry,” Jisung mumbles, he sounds like he is under hypnosis or something, like the word doesn’t quite make sense to him. Because nothing around him really does.

“Bin-ah, come on,” this time, it’s Chan who whispers. He reaches his hand towards Changbin’s biceps, gently turns him so he’s facing the professor and not Jisung. Jisung’s pretty sure Chan’s trying to make eye contact with him too, probably to ask him if he’s fine, but he doesn’t have it in him to reciprocate or tell Chan that he’s most likely time-travelled, or lost his marbles.

“Now that you’re all here, let’s talk about the track you submitted, okay?” The professor begins. Chan and Changbin respond with an enthusiastic ‘Yes’, and Jisung joins them with his much more reluctant version when their eyes once again shift to him after he’s probably stayed quiet for too long.

Jisung opens his lips and silently recites the professor’s words under his breath:

“I’m sorry, but the track can’t stay the way it is now.”

This is absolutely fucked up. The date could be explained, having R&B Composition today perhaps too, but there is no fucking way to explain this. There is no way the professor would say the exact same words, and deliver them as news on top of that, on two different days in a row.

Jisung would like to focus on the professor’s words this time around, the last time he heard them, the first sentence got him so angry he couldn’t focus anymore, this time, the criticism is maybe the very last thing on his mind.

How has this happened to him? Why has this happened to him? Is he the only one affected by it? Does no one else know this day has already happened once? Should he tell someone? Will they put him in an asylum if he does? Is it a dream? Is it a nightmare? If yes, then it ends with him waking up but when will he wake up? Will he ever wake up? How long will he be stuck like this? Is there any way to escape it? How long will he be able to pretend without people around him noticing? Without his hyungs noticing? He’s like an open fucking book for them.

Jisung spends the entire session in his head, only when Changbin drags him to his feet to bow to the professor when the class ends, he comes back to reality. Or to whatever the time and space surrounding

him is.

Changbin collapses back on the couch right when the door closes.

“Well fuck, that was brutal,” he assesses.

Jisung looks at him, misses Chan getting on his knees in front of him, one hand gently rubbing his knee.

“Han-ah, are you okay?” Jisung looks at Chan, but it’s like he’s seeing through him. It’s like Chan is just a figment of his imagination, of this absurd “reality” he’s now part of. Did Chan react like this yesterday, too? Or is this new?

Chan presses his palm to Jisung’s forehead. Oh, sweet Channie. If only it was a mere fever and not some sort of fucked up parallel-universe-travelling.

“I-” Jisung starts, voice hoarse. He could tell Chan what is happening, maybe Chan would actually believe him, Chan seems to have a back-up plan for whatever situation they find themselves in, maybe he counted in the possibility of... looping through time...

“Yeah, man, you’re, like, out of it,” Changbin chimes in, snapping his fingers a few times in front of Jisung’s face, until Chan softly moves his hand away.

“I’m...fine,” Jisung decides on. “Just haven’t slept much.”

Chan looks at him like he’s pitying him. Jisung knows this look too well.

“Have you...”

“Yeah, I’ve taken my pills, dad, all three of them,” Jisung answers before he lets him finish the question. “Just tired, okay?”

He knows Chan means well. He also knows his tone was a little pointed just now, but he thinks he has the right to it with everything that has been happening to him lately or over the span of the last two days. Or one day. Whatever.

“Anyways, you... mentioned something about an Americano?” Jisung asks carefully, looking at Chan through his lashes.

“Look, he’s well enough to make you his personal wallet,” Changbin laughs. “Let’s fucking go, I’m starving, they better have some of those

chocolate muffins or I swear to God...”

Changbin’s already halfway through the door when Jisung and Chan get back on their feet. He can’t burden his hyung with something like this, Chan’s constantly looking after him, and not only after him but after Changbin too, and most likely after a bunch of other people Jisung doesn’t even know about, he can’t inconvenience him with some supernatural bullshit that he most likely caused himself.

“Let’s figure out what to do with the track over the coffee, yeah?”
Chan suggests.

“Let’s figure out what to do with the track later over some beer, yeah?”

The suggestion yesterday was different. The one that led them to the bar. When Changbin told Jisung off for coming late today it was also different than what he said yesterday.

Oh, and yesterday, Jisung didn’t have two toasts for breakfast, just one. Okay, this means not everything has to be exactly the same. But if there is one thing Jisung’s learned from all the sci-fi butterfly-effect-themed movies and TV series he has seen, it’s that changing something in the past, or in the reoccurring timeline, will affect the future, it will change the development of matters.

So far, having a different breakfast and running to the wrong building at first or coming late to the class he came in time for before, seem like pretty mundane things. He can’t be sure, but he can assume they will not change the development too much.

But... what if they don’t go to the bar? That would be a pretty drastic change from the way the day went originally, right?

Changbin leads the way to the café at their campus. It’s a nice cosy spot located on the ground floor of one of the buildings where their music major doesn’t have any classes. Chan is walking close to Jisung, he’s probably saying something, but Jisung mostly filters it out, still staring at the date on his phone screen, still trying to come to terms with what’s happening around him.

He’s not paying attention when he accidentally collides with another body.

“Shit, sorry,” he apologises automatically.

“Excuse you,” is the rather curt reply in the rather soft, thin voice.

“Do I look okay to you?” The man asks, his voice surprisingly soft now that he’s not yelling his lungs out with anger.

Jisung whips his head around, ignoring Chan’s fussing at his hide. Everything around him pales, fades in the background except for the vibrant orange mop of hair retreating further away from him.

Was that... him? The Lee M. guy?

Oh. It’s Thursday, isn’t it? So, it makes sense that he is... that he is alive. Jisung feels a weird mixture of emotions overwhelm him all at once. The only interaction he has ever had with him was an argument at a bar and then...

Jisung doesn’t really want to think about the second time they ran into each other, the way he acted or rather not acted, what he caused with his indifference. But here the stranger is. He doesn’t seem any more pleasant to be around than he seemed at the bar, but he’s alive and well and that’s what matters.

Jisung weirdly feels like running up to him and apologising, which would make him look like a complete nutcase, so he doesn’t do it, but the urgency is definitely there, thrumming beneath his skin. Will Lee M. go to the bar tonight? Or has Jisung already done something that will change that course of action? Should he tell him to avoid the bar? He doesn’t know anything about him so he probably shouldn’t bother, the guy would write him off as a madman anyway.

He watches as the Lee guy is joined by a much taller thin blond with long hair at the entrance to the building, and then they wander off in the general direction of the campus, to wherever they need to go, a little smirk on the guy’s lips, though Jisung can see that only partially from this angle.

Turns out he does smile sometimes.

“Rude cunt,” Chan grumbles through his teeth. Jisung smiles a little at that, or was he smiling before Chan spoke? “You okay?”

“Y-Yeah,” Jisung agrees easily. “Wasn’t his fault, I was staring at my phone.”

“Still, he didn’t have to be rude like that,” Chan stubbornly defends his point.

Jisung can’t really find it in him to be angry. It might be the immense

relief of seeing this guy in real life, alive, instead of his photo attached to an article about a dead body.

He shrugs in response. When he thinks better of it and pulls on his best hurt-baby expression, jutting his bottom lip out and hugging his arm with his hand.

“But my arm hurts so much!” He whines. “That guy had some solid muscles... I think I need some Americano to feel better, and some cheesecake to feel okay again,” he sniffles.

Chan squints his eyes at him, well acquainted with Jisung’s antics by now.

“You little..., good thing you didn’t forget to bring your credit card, right,” He announces, turning on his heel, leaving Jisung to stumble after him. Changbin’s already yelling at them both from the queue in front of the café’s counter.



They end up talking about the track over their coffees, and over Changbin’s muffins and Jisung’s Chan-purchased cheesecake, but to Jisung it suddenly doesn’t seem like such a big deal. Changbin is pretty angry about having to change their track, complaining about how it’s good the way it is, being vocal with his emotions as always. Chan is a little frustrated, but he mostly wants to get it over with so they can all be certain they will pass the class and have their credits rightfully recorded by the end of the semester.

Since they respectively worked on individual parts of the track, they agree to take a look at them by themselves first, and then, should they make any changes, they’ll share the parts together and discuss what else could be changed. Chan comes up with this orderly work process so quickly it’s almost like he half-expected the professor to not be satisfied with their track, but then again, it’s Chan and his back-up plans for back-up plans, so it’s really not that surprising.

After his classes end and after he buys a new loaf of bread as he promised himself he’ll do, Jisung spends his evening alone in his apartment, looking over his part of the track. He doesn’t really have a desk in his apartment, so he perches up his laptop on his knees and situates himself between his plushies on his bed. He likes spending time with his friends, but he much prefers a quiet night like this over getting drunk and yelled at at a bar.

He tweaks some parts of the track here and there and before he realises it, it's already 2 AM. He should go to sleep if he wants to get up in time for his class the next day. He still doesn't know what this time-travelling bullshit was supposed to mean but he supposes it could be worse. He didn't fight with Changbin, he didn't make Chan question the way he deals with negative emotions, he didn't get into an argument with the Lee guy, who is still alive. Is it a dream after all? From which point has it become a dream? He guesses he will never know, and he decides it doesn't matter as long as things work out the way they did.

Jisung falls asleep to the soothing sounds of rainfall in his earbuds.

There is a lump in the quiet darkness, made of black, grey, vibrant orange and... crimson red, the red pooling around it, seeping into the dark with horrifying squelching.

Someone's gasping for breath, but their efforts seem futile, they always seem to choke on something in the middle, something clogging up their airways, something they can't cough out. Something they gurgle on.

"...lp me," the lump quietly sobs. It's like there is barely anything left inside it except the red it's overflowing with.

"Help me!"



Jisung startles awake with the inhale of a drowning man in his bed, his forehead streaked with beads of sweat dripping into his eyes. He's trying to breathe in as much air as humanly possible.

He shakily reaches for his phone on his bedside table. The digital clock next to his bed lets him know it's only 9:00.

With trembling fingers, he opens his browser, types in: *Body of a university student (25 M) found in Gangbuk District*. His mind still has to catch up with what he's doing but his body's holding the reins for now, guiding Jisung's actions that will no doubt make sense in a bit.

No articles show up.

Jisung breathes out a sigh of relief. It gets stuck in his airways when he tries to inhale, though.

He switches his phone screen off. Turns it back on.

Thursday, October 12 stares back at him, along with a single text message from Chan.

8:15 AM Channie-Hyung

You coming? Today is the big day haha!

...Fuck.



Okay, clearly that didn't work out the way Jisung planned, if what he did can be considered planning in the first place. Clearly, this predicament is not going to resolve itself just by going to bed and hoping for the best. If he accepts, which he sort of already did, that this is not a reoccurring dream, chances are he has to do something to escape this loop he's found himself in, and that something is not pretending it's not happening, or that it's perfectly normal.

Now, he could start by assorting the facts he has gathered so far, observing his course of action, possibly stressing out about the courses of action of others, because if he were to overthink it, he could come to the conclusion that what someone else does or doesn't do directly affects whether or not the day repeats. But considering Jisung's the only one who seems to be aware of the day repeating, he is most definitely the driving force of this parallel reality.

Or maybe 'driving force' is not the correct term? Rather, the one who can steer the driving-force a certain way that could/should result in escaping the loop. Jisung's pretty sure he already knows who the 'driving force' is.

Yes, he could debate maybe the loop would stop if he ate one toast for breakfast instead of two, or if he took the train to school from a different station, or if he openly talked back to their R&B Composition professor, he could drive himself insane with all the possibilities, but why would he do that, when it's already more or less clear.

Whatever higher power has decided to curse him with getting stuck in a time loop probably took a hint and realised that with Jisung's tendency to overthink, he could live through hundreds of these loops, attempting to change the most mundane things that could potentially

have an effect, and so it tossed him a very evident hint.

The nightmare he just had.

Was it a nightmare? Or was it something that was actually happening while Jisung slept, a projection of sorts straight to his brain; this is what happens when you try to run away from the task you've been given? He doesn't want to dwell too much on it, lest this particular loop ends with him going insane thirty minutes after he woke up. What matters is that he's got the message.

He must prevent the orange-haired Lee guy from getting killed.

Fine, simple enough, isn't it? He managed to summarise what he must do in a single sentence, that's something he achieves very rarely, so that's a good start, right?

A good start maybe but then the details come in and they leave him drenched in cold sweat. Details such as, how in the ever-loving *fuck* is he exactly supposed to do that?

Okay, let's look at what he knows so far: the guy most likely goes to the same university as Jisung does, that actually narrows it down quite a lot. Assuming the guy wasn't just randomly at the campus café, and actually studies there, Jisung will simply have to somehow get his hands on the list of students at *all* the faculties in the *entire* university and then look for a guy who's 25 years old and whose last name is Lee and whose first name begins with an M...

Or! He could go to the bar in the evening and somehow prevent Lee M. from... from what? Getting murdered? He doesn't get murdered in the bar, does he? Maybe the bar actually has nothing to do with him getting murdered. Perhaps the first idea that popped into Jisung's head was that the murderer is the broad guy who tried to drug the Lee guy, but he can't be certain about that.

Then... should he find out who murders the Lee guy first? Should he wait in front of the convenience store and follow Lee M. once he runs past it with the murderer most likely following him, and follow them to do... what? Fight the murderer off? That doesn't seem probable. Witness the murder? Honestly, Jisung doubts he could stomach that. Maybe he could get murdered instead? But would that stop the loop, or just get him killed? And come to think of it, what guarantee even is there that if he waits in front of the convenience store he will encounter the murderer? What if the Lee guy was murdered close to Jisung's apartment only once, he could be getting murdered all over

Seoul in these other loops.

Jisung pulls on his hair in frustration. There he goes overthinking again! Can't the higher power that showed him Lee M. getting murdered toss him one more bone here?

Fine. He is aware of two main facts: 1) he has to prevent the Lee guy from getting murdered, and 2) he will not be able to do that by doing nothing. In all these scenarios his unhelpful mind conjured up so far, there is one link: Lee M., the victim. Therefore, it only makes sense to start there.

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"Well fuck, that was brutal," Changbin assesses the professor's criticism of their track, slumping back against the sofa.

Jisung can barely recall a single thing he did when he found himself in this exact situation yesterday or... today but one loop back. He knows that whatever it was, it led to them going to the campus café, and – and this is the important part – bumping into Lee M. So, Jisung doesn't have to go through all the students' records to find him, he can easily find him like this, let fate do its' thing.

But naturally, he psyches himself out over it. If he looks in a different direction than he did yesterday, if he sits at a different angle than he did yesterday, will it change them going to the café? Will it change Lee M. going to the café? But Jisung's definitely already done some things differently since he woke up, for once reminiscing about all of this, and it hasn't led to a significant change yet because Changbin just said the exact same words he did yesterday.

"Han-ah, are you okay?" And there is Chan kneeling in front of Jisung, one hand on Jisung's knee. Also the same.

Jisung thinks he said something about being tired last time? Should he do that now? Or should he-

"Have to clear my head a bit, can't discuss this shit right away, sorry guys. Aish, fucking pissed!" Changbin announces, already getting up from the sofa. He sounds like he's responding to something, and Jisung doesn't think he's heard this sentence before.

"Yeah, me either," Chan sighs, defeated, still drawing gentle circles on Jisung's knee. "Let's figure out what to do with the track later over some beer, yeah?"

Okay, that's a sentence Jisung remembers. But not from yesterday.

Oh shit!

"No!" Jisung blurts with such urgency both Chan and Changbin look at him in shock.

"What... What do you mean?" Chan asks, taken aback.

"Just..." Oh shit, he has to come up with something. "I... actually, um, tonight I... I don't have time," Jisung makes up as he goes. "... Yeah, I don't have time so can we talk about it now? Can we talk about the track now?"

His hyungs look at him suspiciously. There is no way he doesn't have time, he's either with them or holed up in his bed at nights, but thankfully they are kind enough to not call him out on his lack of socialising.

"...Sure?" Chan suggests. "Here?"

"No! I-I mean..." Oh fuck, this entire conversation is already taking way longer than it should, by this time yesterday, they were already on their way to the café.

Jisung jumps to his feet.

"Aah," he moans dramatically. "I could really use some coffee on this fine morning, don't you agree, hyung?" He quickly glances at Chan.

"I don't drink cof--"

"Changbin-hyung, have you had the chocolate muffins at the campus café yet? You definitely have, right, so let's get some more! Okay? Okay!"

Jisung quickly throws his backpack over his shoulder. Chan and Changbin exchange questioning looks behind his back. He's not normally the one who would suggest going to a public space filled with people, especially when he's been offered an alternative of a quiet, empty studio. There is also nothing 'fine' about this morning, they were literally just told off by their professor and have to remake the work they considered perfect.

But Jisung honestly can't be bothered. He has to get to the café at approximately the same time they got there yesterday. Finer details be

damned.



After Jisung endures multiple questions of whether or not he's feeling okay or if something happened by both Chan and Changbin, though Chan definitely dominates the interrogation, they are finally in the queue in front of the cash register.

Changbin goes to check out the chocolate muffins, Chan stands at Jisung's side. That's the same as it was yesterday. Jisung anxiously glances at the time on his phone screen and realises there is no point to it because he doesn't know what time it was when the Lee guy bumped into him. But he did bump into him when Jisung was looking at his phone, so maybe if he keeps looking he'll eventually show up?

The queue is getting shorter, Chan is asking Jisung if he wants to have an Americano and a cheesecake and it hits Jisung that this question is new, yesterday, he told Chan what he wanted before Chan had the chance to ask.

Fuck, fuck, fuck. Does this mean he already missed his chance? Does this mean the Lee guy already walked by and Jisung didn't notice him? What if he really is not even here this time?

"Hi, what can I get you?" The barista asks and Jisung knows for certain he's fucked up because they placed their order only after the whole ordeal with Lee M. yesterday.

Ignoring the barista and Chan, Jisung frantically looks around as if there was a murderer following *him*. He's desperately looking for vibrant orange in the crowd, squinting at the entrance door, around the queue, scanning the faces of all the baristas he can see, and he doesn't see him anywhere.

What if he changed his hair colour? What if he woke up today and decided to dye his hair? What guarantee is there that he'll look the same he did in the previous loop? What if he has a hood on or a hat on, or what if-

Vibrant orange. At the table further in the back. Dark t-shirt, black pants, dark sneakers, face the perfect mixture of soft and sharp features.

Lee M.

It looks like he's finished eating whatever he had – Jisung notices a rather small plastic cup in his hand – and is getting ready to leave.

What was it that Jisung said he wouldn't do yesterday? Wouldn't run to the guy and beg him to not go to the bar because he would seem like a nutcase and the guy wouldn't listen anyway? Well, scratch that, here and now he doesn't have any better idea than to do exactly that.

Jisung sprints across the space littered with tables, chairs, students, and students at tables and chairs, he bumps into so many people he has to meet his bumping quota for a lifetime, blurts out a few breathless apologies to make amends. It can't take more than a few seconds to run where Lee M. is sliding his chair back to the table, but to Jisung it feels like hours.

He doesn't think about the harsh replies he has received from this guy so far, doesn't think about how he can pick a fight with a man head taller than he is, doesn't think about anything except the urgency to speak to him.

Jisung reaches for his wrist. It might be because he's not expecting it, but Lee M. goes easily to where Jisung's hand guides him, and in the next second they are face to face.

Now that he's not angry or scowling, the softness in his face comes naturally to the surface; his mouth not a set line but slightly opened in a silent surprise, the gap between his full upper lip and thinner lower lip leaving just enough space for two front teeth to poke out, making him look a little bit like a startled bunny. His eyes, which seemed so dark before, are suffused with light and unspoken questions.

Before Jisung can choke with how utterly ethereal this Lee M. is, he chokes out what he's prepared but hasn't rehearsed.

“Don't go to the bar tonight!”

If questioned, Jisung wouldn't be able to answer why he decided on this sentence, this demand, when he spent this very morning pondering how the bar maybe has nothing to do with this guy getting murdered.

As these thoughts run through his mind, Lee M. blinks at him so slowly it's like he thinks if he closes his eyes for long enough maybe Jisung will evaporate into the thin air, and he can carry on with his late morning routine, doing whatever it is he does after he's done sitting at the café.

Jisung thoughts are slowly but surely catching up with what he intended to say, the message he wanted to convey. It all comes jumbled up because he's speaking at the same rate he's arranging his thoughts, maybe his mouth actually runs at a faster pace than his mind does.

"Or, not just to the bar but don't go anywhere! Tonight! Just..." Jisung desperately reaches for the words stuck in his throat. "...Just maybe stay home? Please?"

That... that should do it, right? If he stays at home then the risk of him getting murdered has to be minimised drastically. If the bar is not the trigger, then perhaps the trigger is leaving his house altogether. God, Jisung has no idea.

Jisung didn't even realise but at some point he must have shifted his gaze to Lee M's chest because he is facing the sharp clavicles peaking from the crew neck of his t-shirt when the man himself gently clears his throat to get Jisung's attention back.

"I'm sorry," he starts. He doesn't sound angry, and Jisung considers that a small victory. "Do I know you?"

At this point, they must be looking at each other with equally stunned expressions.

"No...?" Jisung phrases it as a question, he can feel blood pooling in his cheeks from this entire embarrassing ordeal. "No. No, you don't know me. I-I mean, I don't know you either, right, but that's- that's not what matters. Just please listen to-"

"Minho-hyung! You coming?" Jisung's startled by a shrill voice coming from near the entrance door.

He curses the momentary distraction, turning back to Lee M., finding his voice again.

"Listen to me and-"

"In a bit, Hyune!"

"Minho-hyung! You coming?"

Jisung feels a shiver run down his entire spine. Now it's his turn to dazedly blink at Lee M... Lee *Minho*. After he's witnessed this guy kick a man, exhaustedly stare at his glass, argue with Jisung, argue with

Changbin, beg for Jisung's help, and be murdered, he finally knows his name.

"Sorry," Minho says again like he has anything to apologise for. "You were saying?" And the weirdest thing is, he looks genuinely curious and invested.

It is definitely a curious affair when someone you have never seen runs up to you and begs you to not do something, but that would normally weird people out, wouldn't it? Normally a person approached like that would try their hardest to vacate the space of the person who approached them as soon as possible. But Lee Minho is still standing there with Jisung. He could very well tell him to fuck off, especially now that there is someone, presumably a friend, apparently looking for him. But he's still... here.

"I-I know it sounds weird, like Final Destination or something, but you have to believe me!" Jisung tries again with newfound urgency. "Stay home tonight, don't go anywhere, please!"

"And why should I do that?" Did Minho just smirk? Chuckle? Jisung has no way to tell whether this guy is or isn't taking him seriously.

What should he say? Should he just tell him the truth? *Because you'll get murdered if you go.* Jisung's not even sure of that. What guarantee is there that the murderer wouldn't climb to Minho's room through the window and murder him in his sleep? There is none, he can only work with what scenario is more probable.

"Because..."

"Give me one good reason why I shouldn't, and I won't," Minho challenges and now there is definitely an easy smirk on his face, a sort of gleam in his brown eyes.

It seems like he's comfortable making Jisung uncomfortable.

"B-Because..."

Jisung's stammering through his answer, or through some bullshit-in-the-making when there is the sound of quickly approaching footsteps.

"Jesus Christ," it's the same voice that interrupted them before, only now it's not yelling, it's just aggravated, a little whiny, too.

Jisung looks up and for the second time today, finds himself staring at

a man of ethereal beauty. His face literally looks out of this world, his skin has a healthy colour to it, the most prominent thing about him is either his plump, full lips, or the long blond hair, Jisung can't quite pick.

"You can pick up guys later," the guy whines, interlocking his arm with Minhø's.

He's taller than Minhø but when he tries to drag him away, he either doesn't put any strength to it, or it goes to show Minhø's deceptively strong despite his relatively short build because he doesn't budge one bit.

Jisung's ears colour when the implication of what the guy said registers in his brain. And if he didn't know any better, he would say Minhø's ears reddened a little too.

"We'll be late for the rehearsal, come on!" The out-of-this-world-beautiful guy – Hyune, was it? – continues whining, tugging on Minhø's arm to no avail.

Minhø looks at him, the light from his eyes seems to seep away.

"Then get a move on," Minhø chastises him, but there's something playful in his tone and the light immediately returns to his eyes. "You need me to walk you to the studio or what? Go. Shoo!"

"But I want to go together!"

"Why?"

"Because we always go together 'cause we're friends!"

Minhø wrinkles his nose, looking disgusted for a second as if the affectionate term left a terrible taste in his mouth. Jisung can't help but think that it's quite endearing.

"Come oooooon!"

"Jesus," Minhø rolls his eyes but ultimately gives up. "Okay, since you're incapable of moving on your own."

"I'll take it!" Hyune announces happily.

After apparently achieving his goal, Hyune seems to realise that Jisung is there. He looks down on him – not in a bad way, he can't look at him any other way with the difference in their heights – and

Jisung watches a light bulb go off in Minho's head.

"Oh," he says as if he just remembered something. "This is Hyunjin," Minho says, motioning his hand in Hyunjin's- *Hyunjin's* direction.

He doesn't offer any other explanation or definition of what he is to him, and somehow, even with how little Jisung knows about Minho, he doesn't find it weird.

Hyunjin slightly bows to Jisung, which Jisung reciprocates.

"Hyunjin-ah, this is..." Minho measures Jisung with his feline eyes. Another smirk stretches across his lips, it makes Jisung slightly apprehensive. "...the prophet of my fate," Minho says with a playful smile like he's talking about the weather.

Jisung chokes on his spit. Coughs into his sleeve.

"Nice to meet you, proph- huh?" Hyunjin turns to look at Minho with the purest form of confusion creasing his statuesque face.

"We must go to the rehearsal, right? No time to waste and all that?" Minho slips his arm out of Hyunjin's half-hearted hold.

"Y-Yeah..." Hyunjin stutters, still no doubt going over what Minho's just called Jisung. Jisung shares the sentiment.

"Then, see you around?" Minho asks. It's like he's expecting a profound answer in return.

"Y-Yeah..." Jisung echoes Hyunjin.

"I mean," Minho chuckles and the apple of his cheek seems to make him squeeze his left eye a little. It's... pretty, Jisung thinks. "You tell me. You must know, right?"

Insanely enough, Jisung looks at Hyunjin, whom he just met and never seen before, for some clues as how to answer. But Hyunjin's just staring at Minho with an equally puzzled expression.

"...I-"

Minho's laugh rings through Jisung's ear. Jisung doesn't understand what he's laughing about but he wouldn't mind hearing it more often.

"Okay, bye for now!" Minho finally bids his farewell, he looks at Jisung in a way that makes him think he's going to ruffle his hair or

something.

Getting dragged away by Minho, Hyunjin turns over his shoulder to wave a silent goodbye to Jisung. Jisung bows and then he's left alone, standing next to the table Minho previously occupied, to gather his thoughts.

Out of everything that could have happened, Jisung would never have imagined he'd be the one leaving this confrontation at loss for words. Perhaps it's the weight of everything that makes him slump into one of the chairs there.

He wants to think about what just happened, but he finds... he doesn't have anywhere to start because he learned virtually nothing, and he is left with more questions than before. Did Minho take him seriously? Will he stay home? Will he go to the bar? Does he think Jisung's insane? He can't answer any of those.

He has learned Minho's name, that's definitely a plus, he thinks. But other than that has he learned anything else? He has a beautiful tall blond friend named Hyunjin, who is younger than him because he called him hyung. That's one fact, Jisung supposes. But in terms of who Minho is... Jisung doesn't think he could come up with an answer to that. He definitely was nowhere near as mean as he was when Jisung interacted with him previously. Yes, he chastised Hyunjin but there was no malicious intent behind it, that was clear as day. Maybe Jisung misunderstood him the first time?

Wait, why is he even concerned with that? What does it matter to him what Minho's like? The important part is to keep him alive.

Or prevent him from getting murdered so that he can stay alive.

So that Jisung can escape the loop. Yes, that's why.

"Someone you know?"

Jisung startles, jumps up in the seat a little bit. He turns to look over his shoulder.

Chan's looking at him with a gentle smile. There is a big plastic cup with a straw in his right hand, in his left, he holds a plate with one slice of cheesecake.

Shit, Jisung left him at the cash register when he ran off unannounced. That wasn't very kind of him. And yet, Chan offers him

nothing but kindness in return.

Suddenly, Jisung feels a little sad.

“Yeah no, I...” He doesn’t know what to tell Chan, and he realises it’s not because he wants to withhold the information from him, but because he genuinely doesn’t know. “I don’t know,” Jisung sighs.

Chan looks a little taken aback. It makes sense.

“Oh... okay,” he offers. “Can I sit with you?”

Jisung looks down at the empty table. He doesn’t have anywhere to be until his afternoon classes start. He wanted to attempt to reorganise his thoughts, but he thinks he isn’t going to get very far with that. He guesses he can only trust Minho will listen to him.

Jisung nods. Chan places down the cup of coffee and the plate with cake, sliding them over to Jisung.

“Thanks,” Jisung mumbles. He knows he should be grateful, should thank Chan properly, but there is so much on his mind he can barely remember to do that.

Chan just smiles.

“Changbin forgot his headphones in the studio, will be right back.”

“Okay.”

Fuck, Jisung hates himself. Why can’t he offer anything other than one-word answers? Chan’s trying to cheer him up obviously, the least he could do is play along with it.

But why does he need cheering up in the first place? It couldn’t be interaction with Minho that left him this drained. Sure, he was on unsure footing through most of it, but he didn’t hate it. On the contrary. Maybe. He doesn’t know.

If Minho stays home tonight and the plan works and he doesn’t get murdered, then Jisung will be saved from the loop and... will Minho remember him? Or Hyunjin? Will *he* remember Minho? The rational answer to the former would be of course no. To the latter; maybe yes? And it shouldn’t matter. Jisung never spoke to Minho before today, outside of this parallel universe, he came to know him as someone rude, mean, someone he wouldn’t want to get to know, so why does it

matter to him if he'll remember him or not?

And what if the plan doesn't work? What if Minho doesn't listen and goes outside, or what if the murderer finds him at his apartment? Will... Will Jisung have to watch him die again...?

No. No, he has done enough overthinking for today. He spoke to Minho, that's what he wanted to do, and he did that. He can't do anything else now. Now, it's up to Minho.

Jisung notices Chan's worried look and forces himself to slice into the cheesecake with his fork, tasting nothing but ashes when he puts the little piece in his mouth.

Sometime later, Changbin joins them at the table, loudly complaining about the changes they have to make concerning the track, and Jisung's mind wanders off at the *changes* part.

Jisung thinks it's ironic how the perception of a person changes more with mundane conversation in a café than with watching them throw a vodka shot in someone's face.



Jisung survives the rest of his afternoon classes and remembers nothing from them. He doesn't share any of Thursday afternoon seminars with either Chan or Changbin so there is no one who would remind him to pay attention, and honestly even if his hyungs were there, Jisung thinks it wouldn't help. He couldn't focus on whatever they were discussing at the café either. Thankfully they didn't question him about it, didn't question his suddenly remorseful state and the inability to not escape inside his head.

He realised the last class ended only when the professor had called his name and asked him if he needed to discuss something with her. Jisung turned around and found out he was the only student left in the classroom. He packed his laptop as quickly as he could and, with a final bow to the professor, stumbled out of the seminar room and the university building.

The sun has begun to set already, turning the air cold. Jisung pulls up his scarf and hides his hands in his pockets, beginning to walk home from the campus.

He can't help but feel... insufficient. The concept of just going home and doing nothing while there is someone who depends on him,

whose *life* depends on him, is bizzare . Or is it the other way around? Does his life depend on Minho? If Jisung's understanding is correct, whether or not he'll escape the loop is directly connected to Minho getting murdered so, in that sense, Jisung depends on him. But Minho's life depends on actions that Jisung can influence him to take.

Honestly, the more he thinks about it, the more his head hurts, and the less sure he is of what he previously assumed.

But then again, what can he do now except go home and hope for the best? It doesn't matter that he doesn't know what the 'best' is supposed to entail.

As always when he's unsure or when the thoughts in his head are too loud, Jisung reaches for the headphones around his neck. He'll just put on some music, ideally spend the train ride home napping, and then *qu'est sera sera*.

"Should I try and talk to you right now or will it bring me bad luck?" Just before Jisung decides on what song from his Spotify playlist to play, the source of his jumbled thoughts speaks from beside him.

Jisung turns and stares.

Lee Minho is looking at him like Jisung has no business being surprised he just seemingly manifested from the thin air. There is a big black sports bag over his shoulder. He's hiding from the cold in an oversized puffer jacket, a muffler wrapped around his neck. When Jisung looks more closely, he sees the ends of the muffler are designated as cat paws.

"Or can *you* not talk to *me* right now because it will bring *you* bad luck? Or us both?" Minho questions, emphasising the pronouns.

"I..." Jisung reaches for words that won't come. There was so much on his mind a moment ago, and once again Minho's managed to leave him speechless. "Sorry?" He finally settles on, his voice coming out a little rough.

"Oh," Minho breathes out, amazed. "So you can talk to me. And I'm talking to you right now so that must mean *I* can talk to *you*, too, right? No need to worry about bad luck?"

Stunned, Jisung just nods.

"Nice. What are you listening to?" Minho motions to Jisung's

headphones.

This guy's demeanour seriously changes quicker than the weather. Jisung tries to keep up.

"Um... nothing, I was just about to..." Jisung stops talking, vaguely gesturing to the phone in his hand. Minho looks at him like he wants him to finish the sentence. "...play some music..."

Minho evaluates, seemingly deep in thought. "Fascinating," he deadpans.

Jisung doesn't know how to react. He dumbly nods again.

Then Minho giggles. No smirk, no chuckles, he honest to God giggles.

"Sorry," he says, scratching the back of his neck in a surprisingly nervous gesture. "I... don't really know what to say. Never talked to a prophet before."

"Me either," Jisung agrees half-loudly. "Don't know what to say, I mean," he clarifies. "Never talked to a..."

Jesus Christ, what was he going to say? Why did he set himself up like this? He's looking at Minho, trying to think of what he wanted to refer to him as, and everything that comes to mind is so horribly embarrassing he would rather the ground opened up and swallowed him.

Thankfully, Minho saves him.

"Lee Minho," he offers, probably assuming Jisung wanted to ask for his name. Bold of him to assume Jisung has the social skills to make someone introduce themselves like that.

"...Yeah. Never talked to a... Lee Minho."

"I find that hard to believe" Minho says sceptically. "I guess you must not have talked to many people. There is a bunch of us in Seoul alone. Same with Yangs, you must have met your fair share of them even if you don't know about it."

Jisung's own genuine laugh catches him off guard.

"Well, do I strike you as someone who talks to a lot of people?"

"I bet there's at least one Lee Minho at your local post office, or one

working at the convenience store,” Minho argues. “Check next time you go and then report to me.”

“I’m pretty sure the guy at the convenience store is Kim something, though,” Jisung challenges back.

Minho squints his eyes at him, suspicious.

“He really is a Kim!” Jisung defends surprisingly strongly and loudly, laughter bubbling in his throat.

“If you show me a picture of him wearing his nametag that says Kim, then I shall consider,” Minho concludes, and for whatever inexplicable reason Jisung just says:

“Game on!”

Minho gives him a careful smile. The tips of his ears seem to redden again, probably from the wind.

“Now let’s see if I’ve ever talked to a...” he vaguely motions at Jisung, one eyebrow raised in question.

Jisung understands what he’s after.

“Han Jisung,” he says.

Minho nods to himself.

“Well, Han Jisung,” Jisung notes the first time Minho’s said his name. “You’d be my first Han Jisung.”

“Hope I won’t disappoint.”

What could be called a trademark smirk stretches across the older boy’s lips. “You have yet to,” he informs Jisung.

Jisung is slowly beginning to understand the first impression he had of Minho at the bar. Even from this short conversation alone, Minho doesn’t seem like the type of person to beat around the bush. He seems rather straightforward, not sugar-coating what’s really on his mind, a little bit like Changbin but not quite. Jisung can see how that could be easily misinterpreted as being rude in certain situations, especially in a situation where a guy was clearly bugging him, and even attempted to drug him. He certainly didn’t pick the right target to do that.

“Say, Han Jisung, are you fond of having conversations outside in the cold when there is a perfectly warm café just around the corner? I, personally, am not.”

So he can talk in a round-about way after all, Jisung notes.

Does Minho want to invite him for a coffee? It would... it would make sense, right? Or not that it would make sense for anyone to want to invite Jisung for a coffee because really what could be the benefit of that for the inviter, but it makes sense in the context of how he phrased the question.

Jisung waits for Minho to clarify, but Minho's just slowly blinking at him. He looks like a cat.

“Uh...” Okay, so Jisung should take the initiative? Maybe? “Do you... want to go for a coffee?”

God, the sentence barely wants to form in Jisung's mouth. He doesn't think he has ever said something like this before. Sure, he can sometimes persuade Chan or Changbin to go to a café or a bar, but they don't count, he already knows them.

“Well, if you're offering...” Minho says vaguely. Jisung feels like smacking him on the shoulder, but he holds himself back.

Jisung feels confident enough to tease him back. “Well, someone had to.”

And judging by the sparkles in Minho's eyes, he doesn't mind the teasing.



They sit at the same table they met at today, or that Jisung invited himself at to scream at Minho today. Jisung gets another Americano and a chocolate muffin because the café is already out of cheesecake. Minho settles for jasmine tea and a cup of vanilla pudding, Jisung recognises the plastic container from today's morning as well. When he puts his sports bag down near the chair, Jisung notices a little pudding keychain hanging from the strap.

“You like pudding?” Jisung asks him, like an idiot.

Minho looks at him like he's looking at an idiot. He focuses on opening the plastic container.

“No, I ordered it because I hate it,” he answers simply.

“Oh, come on,” Jisung whines at him.

“Don’t ask stupid questions if you don’t want stupid answers,” Minho giggles. Jisung’s beginning to really love the sound of it. “The one here is good but it has nothing on the pudding in Japan, trust and believe.”

“You’ve been to Japan?” Jisung asks, taking a good bite of his muffin. “You lived there?”

“No,” Minho mumbles around a spoonful of pudding. “Just for vacation. Mostly for competitions, though.”

Ah, so he’s an athlete. That explains the sports bag and his physique.

“What sport do you do?”

“I used to do some taekwondo, hapkido, and some martial arts, too,” he says like it’s no big deal. Jisung mouth opens more with each sport Minho names. Now it also makes sense why he can kick a guy head taller than he is.

“Used to?” Jisung asks. “So, what do you do now?” He gestures to the sports bag on the floor.

Minho looks at it too like it hadn’t been there before. Then Jisung sees that smirk take over his face and he knows he is in for a ride.

“Guess.”

Jisung rapidly blinks. But Minho’s clearly challenging him, wants to have a game of sorts with him, and Jisung, a) doesn’t want to disappoint him, and b) doesn’t back down from a challenge.

He thinks about what he knows about Minho. He is a little taller than Jisung but not by a lot, that most likely rules out sports that would require him to be tall. When he’s wrapped in layers, his body doesn’t look too broad or strong, but Jisung remembers how Hyunjin couldn’t budge him an inch, so he definitely *is* strong, especially his core and legs have to be strong for him to remain standing like that. Plus, Jisung can’t deny it, Minho has some seriously thick, solid-looking thighs on him, so he must do something that requires him to use his legs the most. And if Jisung remembers correctly, Minho said something about walking with Hyunjin to *the studio* for a *rehearsal*,

and since he is most likely not a music major...

“Do you... dance?”

The little plastic spoon from Minho’s pudding clatters to the table before he quickly collects it, lazily stuffs it in the corner of his mouth, and claps.

“Wow, Jisungie,” he breathes out, and where did that nickname come from?? Jesus Christ, Jisung can feel the back of his neck heat up.

“What gave it away, huh?” Minho asks, quirking an eyebrow. “The oozing sex appeal?”

Jisung chokes on his muffin, tries to wash it down with his coffee.

“N-No,” he goes to deny with pieces of chocolate stuck in his windpipe. “I-I mean, not that you’re not... not that... you don’t have... *that*, but...”

“Are you talking to the table?”

Oh, fuck. Jisung’s averted his gaze again. There is something about looking at Minho that makes it feel like staring directly at the sun, like something dangerous, something he shouldn’t do if he doesn’t want to get burned.

He forces himself to make eye contact with Minho again.

“Sorry... Um, it’s just... you, I guess?”

“Me?”

“Yeah, like... you look like you might dance?” Jisung’s seriously talking himself into a pit here.

Minho takes a sip of his tea, he momentarily closes his eyes, Jisung can see his eyelashes brush against his sharp cheekbones.

“Why do you think so?”

Jisung feels like a fish out of the water, and he must look like one too, because Minho decides to spare him.

“Or I guess you are a prophet after all, so I shouldn’t be surprised.”

Jisung’s thankful for the easy way out. He would probably self-

combust if he had to admit that the main clue was Minho's thighs. That, and the studio and rehearsal.

"Should I guess now?" Minho asks.

"Huh?"

"What's your major. Or what you do."

He's looking at Jisung with an easy smile. Jisung reluctantly nods. He resists the urge to bite his nails, but his leg bounces the entire time Minho's scrutinizing him. He takes another bite of his muffin to ease his nerves.

"I think," Minho pauses. "I think you're a squirrelogist," he says, leans over and pokes Jisung's full cheek.

"...Sorry?" Jisung mumbles with his mouth half full.

"Yeah. I think you've always wanted to feel closer to your kind, and the university gave you the opportunity to finally do that."

Jisung's absolutely baffled. He hides his disbelieving laughter behind the sleeve of his hoodie.

"I don't think a major like that actually exists, though."

"Well it should," Minho concludes with no space left for argument. "You could found it."

"Guess I could," Jisung smiles. Subconsciously, he reaches to touch the cheek Minho poked before. He can't remember the last time someone's casual touch made his heart race like it did just now.

Minho nods. Jisung thinks it's his silent signal when he wants to change the topic of the conversation.

He leans on his elbow, places his chin in his hand, and looks at Jisung through his impossibly long lashes.

"You seemed really adamant when you told me to stay home tonight," he begins and Jisung's breath catches in his throat. "Wanna tell me why now?"

Jisung feels icy sweat break out on his forehead, the back of his neck, his palms. This is what they came here to talk about, isn't it? Of course it will eventually be brought up in the conversation. The fact

their chat flowed so easily until now doesn't mean Minho doesn't want to know what is Jisung on about. Suddenly, what they've talked about so far seems more like small talk, means to an end, and Jisung feels embarrassed he didn't realise it sooner.

"Uh..."

"That was a question, by the way."

Jisung doesn't understand.

"...A question?"

"Yeah," Minho says like it's obvious. "I asked you: Do you want to tell me why? So, do you?"

Jisung feels his brows crease.

"Well, I don't but--"

"Okay. So are you really a squirrelogist?"

And- And that's it. Just like that Minho drops the topic. Just because Jisung doesn't want to tell him. Jisung doesn't want to tell him and it's enough for Minho to... lose interest as to why Jisung ran to him and begged him to not leave his house tonight. Just like that they are back to that stupid talk that makes Jisung's heart flutter, that makes an easy smile surface on his lips without him even realising.

Jisung... he thinks he has never felt more at ease talking to another human being.

"I guess I could be the founding member, now that you mentioned it."

"Fine, but then you need a good, I don't know, slogan to make people sign up for the major, because there's not many people whose predecessors were squirrels, and who would want to study squirrels anyway," and just like that, their conversation carries on.



"I'm sorry but we're about to close for today, so..."

Both Jisung and Minho turn to look at an apologetically looking black-haired barista with features so sharp and angular that his eyes appear somewhat thin in comparison. The nametag pinned to the dark green apron he's wearing says Jeongin Y., and Jisung momentarily wonders

if he's also a Yang, if he's really met his fair share amount of them without knowing it just like Minhø said.

Oh, did Jisung spend the entire late afternoon talking to Minhø?

As if Minhø just had the exact same thought, their eyes meet across the table and then they simultaneously look outside of the window to confirm if it's already dark outside.

Minhø looks like he's ready to apologise, reaching for the sports bag at his feet to sling it back over his shoulder.

"Look, guys," comes another voice accompanied by the soft sound of footsteps on the carpet. This voice is much more monotonous.

A slightly taller guy than the first barista comes to stand at his side, he has short natural brown hair and the air around him is much more commanding. He has the same dark green apron on, only on his nametag the words *Store Manager* are more prominent than his actual name.

"We've actually let you sit here more than twenty minutes extra to when we normally close," Jisung briefly checks the time on his phone, it's 20:30. "But we have our own stuff to do other than keep the place open for you to chat. So could you please hurry up?"

Jisung's heart kicks up at that. He did say 'please' but that definitely wasn't a request. Are Minhø and Jisung about to get in trouble because they lost track of time? Or are these guys about to get in trouble because of them? Because they kept the store open when it was supposed to be closed already? Jisung's breathing quickens.

"Sure, sorry to inconvenience you," Minhø says, he's already picked up his bag, wrapped the cat paws muffler around his neck. "Jisungie, come on."

Minhø motions to him and Jisung understands he has to get a move on. Jisung's very thankful Minhø decided to talk, if it was just Jisung alone, he would just stare at the manager and the barista, afraid to open his mouth to not fuck up the situation further.

Jisung quickly puts on his beanie, throws his backpack over his shoulder. He reaches for the plate he had his chocolate muffin on to at least bring it to the dirty-dishes area. Oh god, these guys will have to wash their dishes now too, right?

“Can I help you with the dishes or anything?” Minho asks, holding Jisung’s plate in his hand, his tea mug is placed on top of it.

“Oh, no! That’s-“ the barista with black hair begins to say, attempting to take the plate and teacup from Minho’s hand.

“That would be kind of you,” the store manager jumps in. The barista turns to look at him, surprise colouring his features. “Just please watch the time next time, okay?”

“Yeah, sorry again,” Minho says easily. He doesn’t seem to be angry or startled or anxious or anything, and his demeanour alone eases Jisung’s nerves. “Wait for me outside, Jisungie?”

“Y-Yeah,” Jisung mumbles. He looks at the two café workers. “Sorry for... sorry you had to stay so late.”

“It’s fine,” the barista smiles, and his eyes almost disappear beneath the apples of his cheeks. “You guys looked like you were having fun.”

Jisung feels blood rush in his cheeks. “Still... sorry,” he bows to both the workers, they bow back to him.

Minho goes behind the counter to wash the dishes, the store manager begins to unwrap his apron, the barista momentarily disappears into the STAFF ONLY room and comes back with a cloth and a cleaning agent.

“Seungmin-hyung,” he calls back, most likely addressing his manager. “I’ll do the tables today, okay?”

“Thanks, Jeonginnie!”

This guy hasn’t even cleaned the tables yet, Jisung thinks to himself. He probably didn’t want to disturb their chat.

Jisung glances at Minho at the sink.

“I-“ he finds himself saying before he can really think of it. The barista looks at him. “I could... help you with that, if you’d like.”

Jisung doesn’t know what has gotten into him. He’s been offered an out, Minho told him to wait outside, he could vacate the scene, prevent any more social interactions from happening, prevent staying in the same space with people he’s inconvenienced and most likely pissed off even if they don’t want to admit it directly. And yet, he feels

he shouldn't just run away like that.

The barista smiles at him.

"If you don't mind," he says. "It's really not my favourite thing to do here but Seungmin-hyung did it yesterday so it's my turn today."

Jisung nods like he understands.

"Then, um..." he motions to the cleaning agent and the cloth.

"Oh, there should be more in the staff room. I'll go get it for you," the barista announces, leaving his cleaning equipment at the table.

He turns on his heel to address Jisung once more.

"I'm Jeongin, by the way. Yang Jeongin."

Jisung chuckles. Really a Yang after all.

"Han Jisung," he offers back.

Jeongin comes back with an extra pair of gloves and another cloth, and they set about cleaning the tables. The store manager helps Minho wipe down the washed dishes.

There was a misunderstanding at the beginning, or rather Jisung (and Minho) were at fault, but there is no yelling, no screaming, no one is arguing, they're just silently working together. Jisung kind of wants to slap his past self, who assumed Minho was rude and mean, and someone who likes to pick up fights and start arguments. It couldn't be further from the truth. Jisung's spent only one day with him, not even a full day, but he's certain Minho's a tranquilizer.



About thirty minutes later, they say goodbye to Jeongin and Seungmin in front of the entrance door. They are in different majors, Seungmin in law while Jeongin is in theology, but they must be close to each other because they leave together in the same direction, even when they are further away, Jisung can see Seungmin ruffle Jeongin's hair.

"Sorry to keep you so long," Minho says, and he sounds serious for once. Jisung doesn't know if he likes it or not.

"N-No!" he stammers. "I... I enjoyed it... talking to you... a lot so..."

Minho smiles at him so fondly that Jisung doubts it is directed at him in the first place. Although, he certainly doesn't mind pretending it is.

"Me too," Minho says softly. It sounds like a confession.

Jisung can't believe he can talk to Minho like this. He just assumed Minho would write him off as crazy when he begged him to stay home, and yet he's just coming back home from spending his entire afternoon with him.

Jisung can't quite recall what they talked about, anything from becoming a squirrelogist to how they got into the university to what's their most embarrassing story from a family vacation to different types of puddings to what anime they recently watched. Jisung finds he doesn't mind he doesn't know the exact content of their conversation, it's not really important, he focuses on the warm feeling in his chest that has been there ever since Minho addressed him on his way from the afternoon classes.

"Which way you going?" Minho wakes Jisung up from his musings.

"Oh, um, to the metro station," Jisung points in the direction.

"Where do you live?"

"In... Gangbuk District."

"Is that far by the train?"

"Like 15-20 minutes. It's okay."

Minho nods. Jisung smiles, a topic change is coming for sure.

"Well, a guy once told me to stay home tonight, so I better get going," Minho says, then he looks at Jisung. It's part dangerous, part reluctant. "Unless your intentions were to spend the night with me since you've already kept me so late."

Jisung seriously has to do something with choking on his saliva, this is at least the fifth time today. He's afraid he won't be able to do much about it, though, especially with Minho by his side.

Some extremely inappropriate images that he immediately dismisses flash through his brain.

"N-No! That's not why I- Besides, you said you kept me-"

“Relax, Jisungie,” Minho laughs. “I’m just fucking with you. ...Hold on, that’s not a good choice of words...”

And that would be the sixth time he’s choked on his spit today.

“Jesus Christ, Minho,” Jisung sighs like he has run a marathon. It doesn’t even occur to him he dropped the honorifics. “You’ll be the death of me.”

“I hope not, wouldn’t be able to see you tomorrow then.”

And Jisung’s ease crashes.

See him tomorrow... Will there be a tomorrow for Minho? And if so, will there be a tomorrow for Jisung and Minho? Minho’s played along with what Jisung requested, hasn’t asked for details, and now there is something inexplicably sad at the way Minho’s blinking at Jisung with utter innocence, the innocence that comes from not knowing you are possibly several hours from your own death, not knowing that the person you’re looking at knows.

“The late hour must be getting to me, but my morning’s been pretty shit before you came to me so... mm, yeah,” Minho leaves the sentence open.

Come to think of it... that night at the bar, Minho looked extremely upset. Even before the broad guy approached him, he was kind of just crumpled, having drunk more than half of a bottle of vodka. This Minho that stands in front of Jisung right now is almost like a different person from the one in the “reality”, or in the first version of Thursday, October 12.

Jisung looks at this Minho, the redness in his cheeks and in the tips of his ears, the sparkles in his eyes, his beautiful face half hidden by the muffler, looks at him looking at him, and for a selfish second Jisung wonders... is it because of me?

It’s then that his mind decides to torture him with snaps of Minho kneeling on the floor, red seeping out from his abdomen, searching for help in Jisung’s eyes, begging, and ultimately bleeding out alone on the pavement. And in this scenario, Jisung has no doubt it is because of him.

The need to physically hold Minho so he doesn’t seep through his fingers overtakes him in an instant, like a lightning bolt.

Minho's hiding his hands in the pockets of his puffer jacket, so Jisung grabs the thick fabric at his wrists instead. Looks at him with determination he's maybe experiencing for the first time in his life.

"J-Jisungie?"

"Minho, please don't go outside tonight," Jisung thought he'd be screaming to get his point across, but his voice comes out hoarse, watery.

Minho blinks at him, his mouth opening in that little surprised 'o' shape again. "I... I've already told you I won't-"

"You have to promise me, please. Please. Please, promise you won't go."

How ironic, when Minho begged Jisung for more or less the same the last time, Jisung walked away, and now he's terrified of the possibility that Minho could do the same.

Minho takes his hands out from his pockets, the warmth that surrounds Jisung's palms and knuckles when Minho grasps his hands is... it is probably indescribable, Jisung thinks. Looking at their connected hands, Jisung notices Minho's are quite small. The urge to protect him, the urge to repair what he's already messed up once, overwhelms him.

Minho's sincere gaze holds Jisung's eyes.

"I won't go anywhere," he whispers. "Promise."

Inexplicably, Jisung feels like he might cry, as if he was the one dying.

"Okay," he snuffles. "I believe you."

Minho smiles at him, letting go of Jisung's hands. Jisung misses his touch already.

Then Minho reaches into the side pocket of his sports bag, takes out his phone, there are some stickers on his phone case, but Jisung can't quite make them out. Be it because of the dark, or because of the moisture he's trying to blink away.

Minho holds his left hand with his phone in front of Jisung.

Jisung quickly wipes his eyes on the sleeve of his hoodie.

“W-What’s that?”

“A phone, I believe?”

Jisung lightly smacks Minho’s shoulder, he can’t feel it through the puffer jacket anyway.

“I can see that!” Jisung laughs, tries not to pay attention to how wobbly it sounds. “But what do you want me to do with it?”

“Type in your number,” Minho says. “I’ll send you a picture of me being bored at home tonight so you can... fulfil your prophet duties or report back to your prophet superior or something like that.”

Jisung looks at him. For someone who accused Jisung of talking to the table, Minho’s sure not talking to Jisung now. If he were to go by his logic he’d be talking to either the pavement or the lamppost.

When Jisung still does nothing to take the phone from Minho’s hand, Minho shakes it a little. Jisung gets the message and with trembling, cold fingers types in his phone number.

“Do I save it as a ‘squirrelogist’ or ‘the prophet of my fate?’” Jisung asks.

Minho takes some time to think, rolling his eyes up as if the answer could come from above. “How about... ‘Jisungie?’”

And that’s just such a Minho thing to do, isn’t it? Come up with different titles for him and then fluster him with the only one that’s actually his real name.

Jisung agrees silently, he hopes he can blame his red cheeks on the cold.

He saves the contact and hands the phone back to Minho, relishes in the little brush of their fingers when Minho takes the phone back from him.

“Thanks, Jisungie,” Minho beams at him. “And now I will go and listen to you. Because it’s really cold tonight anyway, not because I don’t have anything to do outside on Thursday evening.”

“Okay,” Jisung laughs.

Minho slides his phone into the side pocket of his bag.

“Then, see you tomorrow,” Minho announces, taking a little bow.

There is that dreadful word again. For a split second, Jisung can feel his entire face crease.

“Yeah... see you,” intentionally leaving the ‘tomorrow’ part out, Jisung watches Minho’s vibrant orange mop of hair, watches him slowly move away, become smaller and smaller, and gradually disappear, taking all the remnants of warmth with him.



After letting his shower head beat him with an onslaught of warm water – the bill be damned, if he’s stuck in a parallel universe it doesn’t matter anyway – Jisung’s getting ready for bed. He doesn’t feel much warmer but, somehow, he doesn’t feel cold either. He doesn’t really feel anything. His throat is tight with what’s going to happen. It’s ridiculous. He’s apprehensive and nervous about something that... he won’t even feel, that won’t even physically harm him. How selfish it is to be concerned with his own state, when there’s someone- when there’s *Minho* completely left in the dark about what pain might be awaiting him.

Jisung couldn’t work on the track either. There are no doubt messages and missed calls from both Chan and Changbin, but he doesn’t have the capacity to answer.

When Jisung was about to enter the metro and turn his silent mode on, he received a message consisting of a singular cat emoji. Still on the train, he scribbled down Minho’s phone number in his lyrics notebook. He doesn’t know if it will be there tomorrow, if it will be there in the next loop. So far, everything he has done in the first loop has disappeared in the second, so it would only make sense for the number to disappear, too.

Jisung’s tried his hardest to remember the number, and he does remember it, but will he still remember it after today is done? And if Minho doesn’t die today, if he lives tomorrow and he doesn’t remember Jisung, what good will it do if Jisung knows his number anyway?

It’s about half past eleven when his phone dings with a new message. Something inside him tells him this message didn’t come from Chan or Changbin.

With shaky fingers, Jisung switches his phone screen on.

11:31 PM OXX-XXXX-XXXX:

[image attached]

Just as he promised, Minho sent him a picture. It's a picture of him with three cats, he seems to be lying on the floor to get them all in the frame. His face looks a little different. Still as beautiful as ever only less... calculatingly beautiful? Fresher? More natural? Like he just washed his face and dried it off in a towel. The little mole on the left side of his nose is also more prominent, and the texture of his skin is lovely. Only then Jisung realises, he must have had foundation on at the university and at the bar too.

There is a sticker note attached to his forehead that says: *staying home*, and it looks like there is a drawing of some sort next to the text? Some kind of a distorted emoji?

Jisung's bottom lip starts to shake out of nowhere and he bites on it to make it stop. It doesn't help. He snuffles. Thinks for a moment that maybe his reply should be something jokey, something not serious just like the picture Minho sent. But he dismisses it. He can't pretend this is no big deal. He can't pretend when he's already getting choked up with unshed tears.

One of his tears hits the phone screen, it blurs Minho's handsome face, and his cats.

Jisung swallows heavily. He takes his time typing like it's his last farewell.

11:37 PM Me:

thank you.

11:38 PM OXX-XXXX-XXXX:



Jisung gives up, lets his tears cascade down his cheeks, lets himself sob, be loud with it, there's no one else in the apartment to hear him

anyway.

He can't remember when was the last time he was this scared to go to sleep, to see things in his sleep. He must have been a little boy still at that point. How easy would it be if he could just throw a temper tantrum, stomp his feet, and complain he doesn't want to go to bed. Have his mom or dad lie next to him so he could finally fall asleep at peace, with his fears soothed.

Now the person he selfishly wants close to him to soothe his fears is the one directly tied to them; the thread woven by Jisung's hands. And Jisung can only hope he's found the way to cut it.

Small, unnaturally pale fingers claw at the wooden floor, splinters stabbed beneath the nailbeds. Scarlet trails left behind.

Scarlet's tainting the fingers as they try and press against the source, the red colour springing from the abdomen. There is too much of it for such small hands to contain.

Crying echoes through the dark. It's soft but not because the pain is so insignificant it allows it to be soft, it forces it to be soft. If he could, he would cry at the top of his lungs, if Minho could, he would scream, he would scream himself hoarse, scratch his throat raw with the painful cries. But he can't. Blood's pooling in his throat and he can't do anything against it.

"...i...e, help me," he begs even though he must know it's futile.

"Help me," his voice cracks.

His head is lying motionless as if it's no longer attached to his body. Gasping for breath, he looks up. His beautiful brown eyes are turning dark again, he doesn't want to let them, doesn't want them to close, fights against eyelids falling shut.

"Ji...sung...ie, help me."

But to no avail. He tries to inhale, but the exhale never comes.



TWs:

Panic attack:

Stop reading at: "Jisung scrolls through the rest of the article",
start reading again at: "His surroundings spin one last time".

Scene summary: Jisung sees Minho's photo attached to the article and it triggers a panic attack.

Mild violence:

In the passages that are entirely in italics, Jisung sees Minho getting murdered. You can skip them, just know that in the last italics passage in this chapter, Minho calls specifically for Jisung's help.

The first passage begins with: "There is a lump in the quiet darkness". The second one with: "Small, unnaturally pale fingers".

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

Be sure to check notes at the end for any TWs. Stay safe! ♡

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

“Minho!” Jisung startles awake with the inhale of a drowning man in his bed, his forehead streaked with beads of sweat dripping into his eyes, tear tracks drying on his cheeks. He’s trying to breathe in as much air as humanly possible but when his voice breaks on the fourth inhale, he just lets himself hide his face in his hands, bring his knees to his chin, and cry in his bed.

What he desperately didn’t want to admit to himself is almost certainly the truth, it’s not nightmares he’s seeing, he seems to be seeing what’s happening in the real world when he sleeps, he sees Minho getting murdered.

Why... What did he do wrong this time? Minho stayed in his apartment like Jisung told him, but it didn’t prevent the murder from happening. If the murderer can get inside Minho’s home then what is going to stop him? Wait, is it still the same murderer, or is it someone else? What the fuck does that matter! It could be someone Jisung knows or someone he has never seen before for all Jisung cares! He doesn’t give a fuck who the sick psychopath is! What matters the most is that Minho is... that Minho...

Jisung barely crashes to his knees in front of his toilet before the content of his stomach comes out. Fresh tears spring into his eyes and he doesn’t know if it’s from the retching, from recalling the murder, from the emotional turmoil, it’s probably some sick combination of everything.

He feels like a mere shell of the Jisung he was when he woke up in the previous loop. How fucking naïve of him, thinking he’ll talk to Minho, tell him to stay home and that will magically resolve everything. He didn’t account for Minho being so easy to talk to, didn’t account for his eyes being so mesmerising, his smile so contagious, his personality so endearing. Didn’t account for... being so infatuated with him.

Fuck. Fucking fuck. Jisung’s spent one day with the guy, one day Minho doesn’t even remember, and yet he... he has always been a

hopeless romantic, has always loved crying to love stories, but it never crossed his mind he could get involved in one. He doesn't want to give any name to the intense emotion in his chest, because that would make it real, and for as long as he can, he wants to pretend it's not real, wants to pretend it's only there in the parallel universe, even though he knows he's lying to himself.

He rests his forehead against the toilet bowl for a little bit before he flushes the contents, gets up to splash some water on his face and wash out the horrible taste from his mouth.

When he makes it back to his bedroom, he notices it's only 8 AM. This means Chan has yet to message him. He quickly checks his phone to confirm his suspicion, stomping down the useless hope that he'll see a text message from a certain phone number...

Jisung chuckles humourlessly. Of course. Of fucking course he doesn't remember Minho's number. He doesn't have to check his notebook to know it has disappeared from it too.

His hand trembles, his leg bouncing so violently it shakes the entire bed. He closes his eyes, tries to take a deep breath in, deep breath out, tries to block out the memories of him and Minho from yesterday, tries to forget Minho's motionless body on the floor, the way he looked at him, the way he called for him...

Jisung chucks his phone against the wall, hears it hit it with a satisfying crack. His breathing's becoming so erratic, his heartbeat spiralling out of control, the world in front of his eyes swaying, blurring, so he smashes the balls of his hands against his eyes with all his might, the ringing in his ear is not stopping, neither are the horrifying images in his brain.

He... wishes for Minho. Wishes for his tranquilizer. For someone who could take all these confusing thoughts and emotions and make them make sense, make this whole fucking ordeal make sense, or be there with him through it not making sense, laugh at its absurdity, say that it's fucked up so Jisung could agree, and that would be the end of it.

There are less than twenty hours until he has to witness Minho dying again. There are less than twenty hours to talk to Minho. Less than twenty hours to get to know him again. Or get to know him better, there have to be some parts he hasn't uncovered yet. Of course, there are, he talked to him for a few hours at most. And... as selfish as it is, Jisung wants to talk to him again, wants to talk to him forever. See

where their conversation leads this time. He doesn't doubt it will be different from the one they had previously. Somehow, Minho doesn't feel like the type of person who would have the same conversation twice, even if he's not aware of already having it.

Through drying tears and the gaps between his fingers, Jisung glances at the digital clock on his bedside table.

8:10

Yesterday, he talked to Minho after they left their R&B Composition class, it must have been around 1 PM or so. If he gets to school sometime past nine it'll give him four more potential hours with Minho. Assuming, he'll be there too.

Jisung has no other way to contact him. The phone number Minho left with him is nothing but a blank space in his mind, he doesn't know where Minho lives, only the direction he walked in when they said their goodbyes in front of the campus café. He just knows he goes to the same university, he tends to be at the café around 1 PM on Thursday, or at the very least on this particular Thursday, he studies dance, has a tall blond friend, loves cats, used to do martial arts, drinks his tea without sugar, likes pudding but prefers the Japanese one over the Korean one...

He shakes his head. It's easy to get lost in Minho.

What matters for now is that they go to the same university, the same campus, which means Minho has to walk through the entrance gate at some point. Has to be at the university at least around 1 PM. Jisung will be damned if he spends the day he could be spending with Minho, if just merely looking at him from afar, locked in his apartment. He won't let him go to the bar and be sad again, he won't just sit and watch while the life of someone he'd already been close to – *feels* close to still – dissipates.

Jisung dries his tears on his sleeve and gets up to retrieve his phone from the floor. Sure enough, the text message from Chan is there.

8:15 AM Channie-Hyung

You coming? Today is the big day haha!

8:16 AM Me:

srly hyung, dont feel too well, think ill skip

8:16 AM Channie-Hyung

Sorry to hear that, man! Get better soon, yeah?

Should we bring you something, or will you be ok?

8:17 AM Me:

ill be ok

*already have everything
i need*

»»

The first flaw in Jisung's plan is, well, the lack of a plan. He left his apartment with no strategy but to wait at the main entrance of the campus. It's just his luck that in this version of parallel reality, the weather has seemingly decided to reflect his mental state, because it's been raining nonstop ever since he stepped outside.

There is no roof or any space where he could hide at the entrance gate, so Jisung's yellow hoodie has been getting gradually drenched, weighing down on him with the weight of everything else. He obsessively checks his phone every other second, doesn't know why he does it, it's not like Minho can reach out to him. At this point, Minho doesn't even know Jisung exists. Every time he reaches for his phone, swallowing down the hope that a text message from a number he doesn't remember but would recognise in an instant would pop up on his screen, he tells himself he's just checking the time.

It's 9:04 now. Numerous students have already walked through the main gate, some of them pointing at Jisung, whispering to each other about the weird little guy who most likely looks like he could fall off or apart if the wind blew too strongly, standing in the rain without an umbrella or a waterproof jacket at the very least. Jisung doesn't pay them any mind. Rain becomes a lot less bothersome in comparison to watching someone repeatedly die, after all.

Jisung had cursed himself for not realising there were several entrances to the campus, three to be exact. For a few insane seconds, he considered calling Chan and Changbin, asking them to stand at gates two and three respectively, report back to him if they see a beautiful guy with orange hair pass by. But he abandoned that idea as quickly as it came. His friends have different things to worry about than Jisung's hopeless, potential, unrequited... friendship that has technically never existed.

He anxiously checks his phone again. No messages. The time is 9:06.

It shouldn't surprise him. There was no guarantee Minho would come to school. What if on this version of October 12, he's sick at home? What if he'll come only to the café at 1 PM?

The second period starts at 10:20, if he doesn't find Minho by then, then he'll maybe go to his class after all...

Wait. What if... What if Minho hasn't walked through the gate yet because he's already *at* the campus, more specifically; what if his first class on Thursday is the first period? If that's the case, Minho's approximately half an hour into the class already, and he must have walked through the entrance gate, whichever one he uses, an hour ago give or take.

That... that actually sounds plausible.

Jisung whips his head towards the campus.

Okay, okay what information does he have that he can work with. There are twenty buildings on the campus, should he just run through all of them? In order? Should he look through the frosted glass of all the classroom and seminar rooms doors? Hope he sees a shade of vibrant orange? How long would that take? If he runs the fastest he can and checks the fastest he can maybe he could...

No, it doesn't make sense. He could spend the entire morning running around buildings only to miss Minho when he exits one of the classrooms once the period ends.

Minho didn't say he *studied* dance, technically he said he *dances* which doesn't necessarily make it his major but based on the assumption that it is his major, that would most likely put him in...

Building 10, wouldn't it? The building where Jisung has most of his major classes, the building dedicated to music-related majors. Was

Minho all this time in the same building with Jisung and Jisung never noticed?

Jisung turns on his heel so quickly that his high-platform sneakers nearly make him slip and fall face-first onto the wet pavement. He catches his balance, and sprints across the campus to the rather small building no. 10.

After he nearly collides with the entrance door, he quickly rushes in. Thankfully, there are not too many students around the corridors, it's early morning, the weather is not good – Jisung mentally apologises for that to everyone affected – and they are either already in the classrooms or on their way to school for the second period.

There are five floors in the building, Jisung has no fucking idea how many rooms there are on each floor but it's definitely less than the number of rooms in all the campus buildings combined. He can do this. He can find him.

Most of his practical classes, such as R&B Composition, take place on the ground floor, so it's maybe safe to say it is dedicated entirely to the music major.

Pushing all his doubts away, Jisung runs up the stairs to the first floor, he quickly rushes through the corridor, plastering himself like a madman against every single classroom door to try and spot a mop of orange hair. Fuck the frosted glass! But somehow Jisung knows if Minho was in any of these classrooms, he would recognise him, would feel it's him. Maybe it's the grotesque life-death connection between them.

By the fourth floor, Jisung's slowly but surely losing all hope. He can barely catch his breath, having to momentarily stop to grasp his knees with his hands and breathe out. He wants to curse himself six ways to Sunday for wasting the precious time he could spend finding Minho like this, when he hears the unmistakable rhythmic squeak of sneakers against a dance floor.

Why should it matter? Jisung wouldn't be able to tell. There are bound to be dance studios in a building for music majors, but there is a pull in his chest, tugging him towards this particular dance studio, one in the second half of the corridor, and he can't resist it.

Jisung walks slowly, carefully, almost tiptoeing. The door to the studio is closed. Faint music filters through, softly resonating through the corridor. It sounds oddly familiar.

Someone's talking inside. Jisung wants to place his ear to the door so he can hear better – be it the music he's certain he's definitely heard somewhere before, or whatever it is the person inside is saying – when the door suddenly swings open.

Mentally patting himself on the back that he managed to not let out an undignified squeak, Jisung presses his back against the row of lockers on the left side of the door. The door opens to the right so maybe he could peak a little inside and not give his presence away.

The person who's opened the door remains standing half in the corridor, their elegant hand with long fingers holding the handle. With their other hand, they unstick the loose t-shirt from their chest, fanning themselves. Jisung immediately recognises the person as Hyunjin.

"Better now?" Hyunjin asks, his head turned towards the inside of the dance studio, the music is no longer playing. He sounds exhausted.

"Yeah," comes a soft sigh, sounding equally exhausted. Jisung pricks up his ears. His quickened heartbeat already lets him know who spoke just now. "Thanks, Hyunjin-ah."

Jisung feels his lips starting to quiver, he covers them with his hand, feeling the tremble against the skin of his palm. He tries to quiet down his stuttery breaths, tries to blink the tears away.

He's really found him. He can't see him, but he hears him and it's alarming how much more whole it makes Jisung feel. It's like he's been missing a part of himself ever since he woke up this morning.

"Hyung," this is a voice Jisung hasn't heard yet. It's a deep rumble, full of worry. Did something... happen to Minhoo? "You should drink something. Here."

Minhoo gives a little grunt in response. Then there is the sound of plastic cracking, Minhoo gulping down water.

Hyunjin's eyes seem to be pointed to the floor inside the room. Jisung has the horrible realisation that Minhoo's maybe not on his feet at the moment, and based on what he's heard so far, maybe he physically can't be, maybe he's so exhausted he can't hold himself up...

"You know..." Hyunjin starts. "Normally, I'd be the last person to lecture you, hyung, but this is seriously getting ridiculous. It is ridiculous. You are running yourself ragged, making yourself fucking

pass out and over what-“

“I didn’t pass out,” Minho says weakly.

“But you would have if me and Felix hadn’t shown up!” Hyunjin’s voice cracks, Minho says nothing in response.

The silence that stretches on for a good ten seconds, interrupted only by wheezing inhales, is so heavy Jisung fears it might suffocate all of them.

“And Felix knows it too, he just doesn’t want to tell you!”

“Hyunjin-“

“No, Felix,” Hyunjin stops the guy with the deep voice, Felix apparently, before he can get one word in. “You don’t get to pretend like you don’t agree with me when you told me yourself.”

“You,” the tall dancer nods in the direction of the floor, Jisung guesses he’s addressing Minho. “You come here at the ass crack of dawn, smelling like a goddamn liquor store, and you stay until the sun is fucking set. You don’t eat anything and then-“

“Hyunjin, stop-“

“-and then you go to drink again and you can’t remember what you did at night, and all of that over some stupid fucking choreo!”

For all the assertive yelling, Hyunjin can’t keep the emotions from colouring his voice, and by the end of it, they burst on his beautiful face. It looks like tears have begun to roll down his cheeks before they could even spring in his eyes.

He lets go of the door handle, and presses the ball of his hand against his face, muffling his sobs.

“Hyunjin-ah...” the deep-voiced guy breathes out, his voice much thinner than before.

Jisung can’t comprehend what’s happening. He’s most likely heard enough to put the clues together, but the sheer heaviness of this situation has locked his rational thinking behind a metal door.

“Can you...” Minho begins, voice barely there. “Can you at least close the door?” He sounds so defeated.

Hyunjin harshly snuffles, coughing a bit.

“No, you’re gonna choke on your sweat if I do.”

“Then... don’t close it completely, just...” Minho leaves the sentence open. It’s pretty clear he doesn’t want others to see him like this, or to hear about his... short-comings. It reminds Jisung a little bit of how Chan is. His heart squeezes.

Hyunjin listens to Minho. Stepping fully back inside the dance studio, he closes the door, leaving it open a bit so the air from the corridor can still flow in.

Jisung feels like he’s invading Minho’s privacy. And not only his, but Hyunjin’s too, and the Felix guy’s too. But he can’t just... leave after what he’s heard. He can’t just leave Minho like this; he phrases it in an honourable way like he’s being there for Minho, like he’s doing something for him when all he’s doing is he’s secretly watching him. The guilt eats away at him, he knows Minho wouldn’t want him to see him like this, even if this Minho doesn’t know him. He recalls watching Minho with the bottle of vodka at the bar the first night and feels disgusted with himself.

It doesn’t stop him from peeking through the little empty space left between the door and the door frame.

He thinks he stops breathing for a little bit, yet he pushes his hand against his mouth and nose the hardest he has yet, when he finally sees inside.

Minho’s sitting on the floor, his forearms resting against his knees. His entire body is shaking, his knees sometimes collide against his will. Jisung can’t see his face, he’s sitting with his back towards the door. His shoulders irregularly jump up and down, and with terror seizing his throat, Jisung realises this might be the first time he’s seeing Minho cry.

A petite man, probably Felix, with blond-platinum mullet and freckles on his face is kneeling next to him, one of his small hands drawing little circles around where the top of Minho’s spine is. There is a half-empty water bottle lying on the floor next to them.

Hyunjin leans against the wall opposite Minho and Felix, just looking at his dance partners for a while.

Finally, he sighs and turns his head to the side, looking at the

mirrored wall.

“I wrote to the professor on your behalf,” he says.

Minho’s head raises at that. Hyunjin doesn’t look at him.

“...What?”

Hyunjin stays silent. In the next second, Jisung watches Minho stagger back to his feet. The little blond rushes to support him but Minho, even with his strength most likely completely drained out of his body, shakes him off.

Minho stumbles to Hyunjin, harshly grasping his collar with his shaky hand. Images from the bar flash through Jisung’s mind.

“You did what, Hyunjin?” Minho repeats, he sounds intimidating, angry, but still broken. Just like he did at the bar. The voice that comes out of his throat when there’s anger bubbling through his veins, but fatigue is written all over his face.

“I wrote to the professor on your behalf!” Hyunjin barks out, turning to look directly into Minho’s eyes. Felix rushes to their side to prevent whatever might happen from happening.

“I told him to tell the producers we want a different track, that we’ve tried but can’t come up with anything, and don’t you dare say it’s not true!” Hyunjin’s voice gets gradually louder. “I fucking refuse to watch you destroy yourself over it any longer!”

“Did I fucking ask you to do that, Hyunjin!” Minho yells back, the natural softness disappearing from his voice.

“Hyung, please,” Felix begs, tears colouring his voice. “Hyunjin was just worried about you, we were-“

“I didn’t ask for his fucking worries!”

For a single moment, this Minho overlaps with the one Jisung saw in the bar. The frustration, anger, pain, it’s all there. And while Jisung wanted to run away from it the first time he saw it, now he wishes he could be by Minho’s side, embrace all his ugly emotions, take them away, soothe the person who has soothed him the most anybody ever has.

Hyunjin actually pushes Minho away, not with a lot of strength,

Minho's still probably stronger than him even in this state, but he does it, nonetheless.

"Tough-fucking-luck, hyung!" he says. "The email's been sent already, he replied he'll talk to the producers today. We're getting a new version of the track whether you like it or not."

And it's then that it finally registers in Jisung's brain. The faint familiar melody he heard from the dance studio.

"There's nothing to change, it's perfect the way it is, I'm not gonna change anything!"

"We can't just put our foot down and refuse to listen to what the professor has to say. I'm sure he has a reason."

"I'm sorry, but the track can't stay the way it is now."

"My morning's been pretty shit before you came to me so... mm, yeah..."

"And then you go to drink again and you can't remember what you did at night, and all of that over some stupid fucking choreo!"

Jisung doesn't hear anything else that transpires between the three dancers, it's like the voices in his head are speaking from within his eardrums. His eyes are most likely open, but he can't focus on anything around him, reality stops making sense to him. It's when all the puzzle pieces click together – the fact that Minho was at the bar drinking because of Jisung, because of something Jisung created and refused to change – that he can't make sense of any of it. Perhaps something inside him refuses to acknowledge it to spare him. As if he deserves to be spared.

And Jisung can't do... anything about it. He is stuck on the day the track's already been long submitted, that Minho's already stressed himself out about it to the point of pretty much breaking down. He can't go back in time and propose to Chan and Changbin they change the track or submit a different one. Fuck, how long have Jisung's and Minho's lives been intertwined without either of them knowing? How long has Jisung been causing Minho pain without knowing?

Such a mundane fucking thing as a music track, such a mundane fucking thing as making a few changes to it, such a mundane fucking thing as a dance choreography. And yet... to Minho, it's not a mundane fucking thing. Jisung knows this. He knows how much it hurts, how stressful it is to hit a slump as an artist, to be unable to

think of anything, when any form of the craft you've mastered feels not good enough, feels insufficient, inadequate, feels like a failure.

Unsuccessfully quietened whimpers wake him up to reality. To the reality of Minho crumbled alone in a little ball on the dance floor, hiding his face in his knees, shoulders shaking. Hyunjin and Felix must have left while Jisung was stuck in his head, they are not in the studio anymore. Minho looks so small left there like that. Selfishly, Jisung wants to cradle him in his arms. He wants to walk up to him, as the cause of all his distress, and beg him to allow him to take it all away, allow him to lighten the burdens he's caused him.

Minho's not a loud or a frequent crier it seems, and that makes the escaped sniffles and sobs hurt so much more.

Every loop, Minho probably wakes up distressed and in pain, cursing himself that he couldn't think of any choreography for Jisung's stupid fucking track again. Every loop, he dies because of Jisung. If Jisung could, he would present him with a completely different track the very second Minho opens his eyes in the morning. But he can't. Even if he worked on changing the track, the changes would have been gone in the next loop, as if they never existed, they could never reach Minho.

Minho sighs deeply, his breath still shaky but Jisung knows what it sounds like when you're trying to force yourself to stop crying. It saddens him Minho doesn't even let himself break down properly. If he wants to, if he feels like it, he should scream and tear everything around him apart until he feels at least a little bit better. Jisung's no stranger to that. But Minho's not Jisung. Jisung knows Minho is not the type of person to let his frustration be known.

Once more, Jisung feels like the scum of the Earth for spying on Minho like this. He has to take his own advice and just... he doesn't know what. He wanted to say just don't talk to him, just don't bother him, just leave him alone, but how the fuck is he supposed to do that when he already hurt him. At this point, escaping the loop feels equally selfish as does staying inside it. Escaping the loop will not take away from the pain he made Minho feel already, and if he stays in it, Minho will just die over and over-

"Can I help you?"

Jisung jumps where he's standing. So submerged in his self-pity he didn't notice Minho must have seen him already, and suddenly, while

he felt so unapproachable on the floor a few seconds ago, he's standing right in front of him, looking at Jisung with pure exhaustion all over his face. If he really did cry, there are no traces of tears left on his cheeks. His eyes look hollow, dark.

His arms are crossed over his chest, and perhaps it wouldn't be something worth noticing if it wasn't for the slight tremble in them. It appears as if Minho's physically trying to hold himself together. While the expression on his face could be written off as bored or unimpressed, his body's betraying that impression, hinting at how distressed he really feels.

Screen up, he's holding his phone in his left hand. The back of Minho's phone rests against his right arm somewhere above his elbow, Jisung remembers the stickers on Minho's phone case, how he couldn't quite figure out what type of stickers they were. The phone display is partially covered by Minho's fingers, but they are not so long or thick to cover it completely, and through the gaps, Jisung notices a notification bubble with paused music player displayed over the lock screen.

He tilts his head slightly, squinting his eyes.

Minho lets out a deep, tired sigh.

"No? Okay. Well now that you've enjoyed the show you can kindly f--"

There's nothing in Jisung's head except the image of Minho completely defeated on the dance floor, trying and failing to make sense of their track *and* the track itself, glaring at Jisung from the phone screen right in front of him, when he spontaneously covers Minho's small hand with his own. The physical contact makes the tremors running through Minho's body so much more real.

"I-" Jisung breathes out with urgency. Minho's knuckles feel somewhat rough against the skin of his palm. Jisung's eyes remain on the phone screen, but he distantly notices how his fingers are longer, bonier, and his skin tone darker than Minho's. "I made that," he finishes, looking up into Minho's eyes.

Minho just stares at him with... Jisung doesn't know, it's impossible to pinpoint what emotion Minho's displaying. On the one hand, it's almost complete disinterest, but on the other, there is something of disbelief, too. He's slowly blinking at Jisung, but he doesn't resemble the startled bunny the way he did yesterday when Jisung ran up to him. It's safe to assume he's shocked, gathering his thoughts, but it's

like they don't matter to him anymore.

"Excuse me?" Minho says finally, monotonous, resignation evident in his voice.

Cold sweat slides down the back of Jisung's nape. He realises that from Minho's perspective, he's in an extremely questionable position as someone who has just witnessed him fighting with his teammates, break down on the floor, someone who's actually rude enough to stand right there at the door and think no one will notice him, and now he's touching Minho out of nowhere.

He honestly doesn't know yet why he blurted out what he did. Maybe he hopes if he tells Minho, the burden of his guilt for making him suffer will ease.

Jisung taps the phone screen to bring Minho's attention back to the track.

"The track," he explains, his voice a bit scratchy. "I... I made that track."

Jisung feels as if he's being scrutinised. The last time he felt like this with Minho, the older promptly informed him he thought Jisung was a squirrelogist. Now, Jisung worries the outcome might not be so light-hearted. But why should it be? There's nothing light-hearted about this situation, nothing light-hearted about what Jisung (and perhaps indirectly Chan and Changbin) put Minho through.

What proof does he even have that he's not making it all up? It shouldn't be surprising that Minho seems suspicious of him. A guy watches him at his most vulnerable, walks up to him, touches him – is actually still touching him – and says he has made the track Minho's been struggling with. That doesn't seem like a believable thing, does it?

Maybe Minho's going to tell him to fuck off, which he probably wanted to do right before Jisung interrupted him, and that will be the end of it. He's going to come back to... to do what? Go back to choreographing for the track? Even though Hyunjin and Felix have made it quite obvious that they can't seem to think of a choreo that would work, that Minho's running himself ragged with desperate attempts to come up with something?

Jisung... Jisung doesn't want that. He doesn't want to let Minho exhaust himself anymore. He'll find one way or another to prove to

Minho that he's in fact responsible for the track. He could maybe... pull up his laptop and show Minho the saved project in the audio program. That ought to give him some credibility.

Minho's still measuring him with his eyes. Jisung doesn't know what he's seeing, he can't be seeing anything else other than a miserable guy, with his clothes drenched from the rain, who doesn't have any business being here and doing what he's doing right now.

Suddenly, Minho closes his eyes. Jisung thinks his eyelids twitch a few times. He finally reluctantly retreats his hand back.

With his eyes still closed, Minho lets out a humourless chuckle, exhales through his nose. When he looks at Jisung, it's with his back slumped against the door frame. He looks... defeated, but he's not shaking anymore.

"Fuck," Minho breathes out, it doesn't seem to be intended for Jisung's ears. "Of course you did," he sighs.

It's hard to say what the tone of his voice is but... it's definitely not sarcastic. A little disappointed maybe? But that's not the right word either. It's empty but with immense weight to it. Like a final conclusion that should have been obvious from the beginning, yet you didn't want to reach it for whatever reason. Jisung doesn't know what to make of it. He only knows Minho's not doubting him and his relation to the track.

"Y...Yeah..." Jisung sighs, dumbly. Staying silent feels wrong but he has no idea what to say. Maybe he should apologise?

Minho gently clears his throat. He pushes back from the door frame, gets his big black sports bag from the dance studio. With the bag over his shoulder, he walks back to where Jisung's left standing, and shuts the studio door behind them.

Confused, Jisung blinks.

"Let's go then," Minho announces, walking in the direction of the stairs, back facing Jisung.

Jisung blinks. And with a few stumbled steps, catches up to Minho.

"W-Where? Why?" He asks, anxious.

Minho spares him a single glance over his shoulder. It makes Jisung

feel the few-inch difference in their heights.

“To talk about that fucking track,” Minho says like it’s obvious. He sounds... softly exasperated if that’s even a thing. “It’s written all over your face,” he concludes.

And once again, just like yesterday, Jisung’s left stunned from his “first” interaction with Minho. He doesn’t want to assume he understands what type of person Minho is, but he’s fairly certain Minho’s not going to offer any other explanation than this.

Clearly, there must have been something that made Minho believe Jisung’s words. Probably something he saw when he was looking at Jisung after Jisung admitted the track was his work.

It’s written all over your face... is it? Or rather, what is? Jisung wonders, silently following Minho to wherever he wants to go.

He brings up his hand to touch his face, as if his hands are going to come back stained with the emotion that has seeped through. They don’t, of course. It’s just his skin, but for whatever reason, his cheeks feel slightly tacky.



It’s a little past ten in the morning, and they’re in the campus café; entire three hours earlier than in the previous loop. It’s still too early to tell if it means something, after all the disappointing experiences Jisung’s more than reluctant to recognise something as significant, as something that could possibly change the development, or maybe the end of the loop. Right now, they are not on... exactly good terms either, if Minho’s rather apathetic posture is anything to go by.

He’s slumped in the chair opposite Jisung’s, both hands stuffed in the pockets of his dark cargo pants, his eyes looking at the table, the expression on his face completely impassive. It looks like he doesn’t want to have anything to do with this upcoming conversation, though he was the one who suggested it in the first place.

Jisung carefully sets his backpack down on the floor. He feels as if one move too quick could set Minho off, or perhaps scare him away is the better term.

“Um,” Jisung tries. Minho looks up at him. He takes it as a good sign. “I’m going to... order something?” he gestures towards the café counter.

Minho blinks at him. “Are you asking me?”

It’s Jisung’s turn to blink at Minho. “...Sorry?”

“I’m going to order something?,” Minho imitates Jisung’s rising intonation. “How am I supposed to know,” he scoffs, averting his eyes.

This Minho feels a lot closer to the one Jisung remembers seeing at the bar. It makes sense, doesn’t it? The mood he’s in now must be similar to the one he was in at the bar; angry, frustrated, exhausted.

Is this... Minho’s defence mechanism? In the bar, Minho was angry at Jisung for just watching the situation and not offering a helping hand but could it... could be that he was actually upset that Jisung saw him at a vulnerable state? Just like now.

Again, Jisung doesn’t want to assume he knows Minho, but when he had no idea who he was and saw him at the bar for the first time, he thought that being rude and mean was simply part of his nature, and now... now it feels way more like a front, like something layered around Minho’s soft core Jisung was able to witness yesterday, like something protective. Like a *defence* of sorts.

Jisung feels like he could say something now that could break this wall Minho desperately seems to be building between them with hands barely holding the bricks. If only he knew what exactly.

Instead, he adjusts his tone to an indicative sentence. “I’m going to order something,” he says. And this is probably a stupid thing to ask Minho when he’s sending all possible signals to make Jisung know he’s not interested, but... “Do you... want anything?”

Minho looks at Jisung. His brows twitch, a little wrinkle appearing in between them.

“I don’t need your pity,” he hisses, ready to defend himself without being accused of anything.

It’s inappropriate, it’s poking the sleeping tiger (though the tiger is very much awake and ready to pounce), but Jisung can’t help it when he chuckles a little.

“Uhh...I’m afraid that’s not on the menu anyway,” Jisung says, tilting his head to pretend to look at the café’s menu written on the green board behind the counter.

Feeling his eyes on him, Jisung risks a fleeting glance in Minhø's direction, and surprisingly finds him with his head turned away from Jisung, most likely looking at the floor. His ear peeking from beneath his orange hair is tinted red.

"It better not be..." Minhø mutters and it sounds too much like sulking to be anything but.

Jisung feels a real smile melt across his face. Maybe he did know what to say to at least poke a hole in Minhø's walls. He considers it a small victory.

"So... do you-"

"I don't," Minhø stops him before Jisung can continue, he's no longer turning away, but he fishes out his phone from his pocket to stare at it instead. "We're losing time here. Go order your something so we can talk," he states, leaving no room for backtalk.

Jisung concludes there's only so much Minhø's willing to tolerate from him, or probably from anyone in general, and he keeps any more potentially provoking lines to himself.

It feels wrong to leave without saying anything, though.

"I-I'll be right back," he tells Minhø, who just waves his hand in a *shoo-shoo* gesture, still looking at his phone.

At the cash register, it's Jeongin who greets Jisung to take his order. Jisung almost addresses him with his first name, almost attempts to make some small talk about how his classes are going or how is Seungmin doing, before he realises he doesn't know either of them, and they don't know him.

Predictably, he orders an Americano for himself, checks the glass display for any cheesecake. There is cheesecake, the café's been open only for a little while today after all, but next to the cheesecake, there are also plastic cups with pudding. Jisung asks Jeongin for one.

Balancing the Americano, and the pudding with a plastic spoon Jeongin handed him with his order, Jisung makes his way back to Minhø. He sets his cup and the little plastic container on the table and sits down. Minhø's eyes immediately jump from his phone screen to the pudding.

"What's this?" He questions like he's disgusted.

To be perfectly honest, Jisung doesn't really know what he wants to achieve with the pudding. He doesn't want it to look like he's pitying Minho because he really is not. Perhaps he could pass the dessert off as a peace offering? Or maybe an apology? But he doubts Minho would want to hear any of that. He also doesn't want Minho to feel like he owes him anything, or like he's trying to get on his good side, or bribe him or...

He's overthinking it, isn't he?

Jisung decides to stick to facts, to the ground reality around him, as much of a reality as a parallel universe can be anyway.

"I..." he feels blood pool in his cheeks as he opens the paper wrap of his straw. "I noticed the... keychain on your bag..."

Minho looks down at his sports bag on the floor as if he needs to confirm the pudding keychain is there. Jisung thinks he sees Minho's cheeks colour a little bit too.

"...And?" he challenges.

"...And... I thought-"

"I've already told you I don't need your pity," Minho says, the blush from his face gone, the sulky tone with it. He sounds fed up, insulted.

Jisung's fucked up. When he looks at Minho, he's picking his bag up from the floor, clearly ready to leave.

It's frustrating, Jisung doesn't know how to make Minho understand. Understand what exactly? He doesn't even know what he's hoping for from this conversation. But he knows he doesn't want Minho to leave, doesn't want their story, in this universe, to end here.

"I'm not pitying you!" He says urgently, meaning every word.

Minho just shakes his head like he finds Jisung annoying. He probably does. Not sparing him a glance, he starts in the direction of the entrance door.

Jisung panics. If he's learned one thing through these fucking loops, it's that Minho leaving is never a good thing. And he's not going to let it happen.

He jumps to his feet, catching Minho's upper arm with both hands.

“No, Minho-” Jisung urges. “Please wait!”

If Minho wanted to, he could easily shake Jisung off and just walk away, he has seen how physically strong Minho is, Jisung doesn't stand a chance against him, doesn't matter how tightly he hangs onto his arm. But for some reason, Minho actually stops, and there is a certain heaviness to it. Certain finality in the way he slowly turns to look at Jisung.

For a while, Jisung doesn't know what's happening. He doubts his begging is enough to make Minho stop and consider what he has to say. But then Minho opens his mouth.

“I never told you my name.”

And the dread that sets in Jisung's stomach at that almost makes him double over.

How could he fucking forget that he's not supposed to know Minho's name yet. While his throat completely dries up, Jisung kicks his brain into overdrive, hopelessly searching for an explanation he could offer Minho. He saw him at a dance competition? Noticed him on the students' list? It occurs to him only later that he could just say he heard either Hyunjin or Felix address him.

“I-I...”

“What the *fuck*,” Minho says, he swings his arm down with such force Jisung's forced to let go of it, “do you really want from me, huh?” He demands angrily.

Jisung has no idea what to say. Minho takes his silence as an opportunity to reprimand him some more.

“Do you have a crush on me? Are you fucking stalking me or something?”

“No!” Jisung blurts. This has turned into such a mess. Has he really fucked up this timeline with Minho? After he promised to himself in the morning he would do anything to spend it with him, to not let the opportunity slip through his fingers. So far, he has managed to look like a fucking stalker, make Minho feel miserable, and offend him.

He imagines Minho walking away from him, disappearing behind the café exit. And then he sees him disappear behind the bar exit, behind the very same café exit with Hyunjin, when Jisung bumped into him

and couldn't find the courage to say anything more, he sees him walk away home when they said goodbye to each other yesterday in front of the campus and then-

"Then what is it?!"

Then he sees him kneeling on the floor, begging for Jisung's help, sees him lying on the pavement holding his bleeding abdomen, sees him clawing at the wooden floor, traces of red left behind by his fingers, by the wounds in his body. Hears him.

"I just..." Jisung defends, short of breath.

"Ji...sung...ie, help me."

He sees his eyes filled with immense pain, with tears.

"I just wanted to help you!"

There are not many people in the café, but all of their attention shifts to them, and Jisung honestly couldn't give less of a fuck. He thinks this is the first time he heard his own voice like that, emotions colouring every single word, each one with a deeper shade than the previous. The need to get the sentence out practically burning his throat, leaving it hoarse.

The world around them falls silent, Jisung can't tell if it's just his imagination or reality.

Minho's expression changes too. He's taken aback, looking at Jisung as if he just saw something he wasn't supposed to, as if he's still seeing something he's not supposed to.

Minho schools his features back together fairly quickly. And before he even opens his mouth, Jisung already knows what he's going to say. Already feels the fire boiling beneath his skin, furious at how powerless he is against Minho's distorted view of his own self.

"I don't need your help."

Something inside Jisung snaps.

"Yes you do actually!" and he means it in every imaginable sense.

What he's thinking, feeling, what he *has been* thinking and feeling, just comes pouring out.

“And I need yours, so I don’t feel like an utter fucking disappointment for failing you. You can’t do this alone, and I can’t either! And I know you want to deny it, but I also know that deep down you know I’m right. I know you hate feeling powerless and, fuck, I do too! So please, please just allow me to fucking help you! I’m the one responsible and I’ll take the responsibility whether you like it or not!”

The more Jisung insists, the more stricken Minhø’s face turns. Jisung’s looking directly at him, but various other images – both cruel, vile, and merciless, peaceful – interrupt what he’s seeing. At the same time, there is the Minhø in front of him, the Minhø poking his cheek while he eats a chocolate muffin, the Minhø looking at him with disdain at the bar, the Minhø tearily pleading for his help.

By the end of his monologue, Jisung’s voice breaks, and he’s hiding his face in his elbow before he can realise how overcome he’s with all the emotions in the small vessel of his physical shell. He can’t stop the sobs from escaping. He doesn’t even have the capacity to realise how ridiculous he must look to Minhø, to everyone in the café.

He didn’t want Minhø to leave, wanted to make him stay, and now he’s just gone and done it.

There is a soothing touch on his shoulder, rubbing little circles. It’s a little uncertain, but definitely there.

Jisung wipes his teary face with the sleeve of his hoodie. He peeks out and sees a small hand. When he looks to where Minhø’s standing, Minhø is offering him a small, sad smile, his eyes silently encouraging but not in an overbearing way. He looks completely different from when Jisung last saw him, a few seconds ago.

Is he... not leaving? Why is he not leaving?

“Come on,” Minhø says, his voice maybe the softest Jisung’s ever heard it, like he’s cooing at a small child, making them come out from under the bed, saying the monsters aren’t real.

Jisung doesn’t know if Minhø’s trying to soothe him because he sympathises with him, understands his emotion, or because he’s simply embarrassed by all the unwanted attention Jisung’s outburst no doubt caused. He thinks it’s probably a bit of both. Somehow, when it’s Minhø, the two don’t seem mutually exclusive.

Jisung snuffles.

“It’s just a track,” Minho says calmly, presenting Jisung with a paper tissue that wasn’t there before, he must have taken it out from his bag.

Jisung’s eyes flit from Minho’s face to the tissue. His eyes look understanding, somewhat saddened, but understanding, nonetheless, his smile a little hesitant but Jisung thinks it’s not because he would rather scowl at him, but more because Minho doesn’t seem sure if a smile is appropriate to handle such emotionally heightened situation. Jisung can’t think of a single occasion when he wouldn’t wish to see his smile.

While Jisung can’t do anything but stare, Minho takes the initiative.

“C’mere,” he requests, voice gentle, and brings the tissue to Jisung’s face, carefully dabbing away his tears.

He’s immersed in the task at hand, as if Jisung’s so fragile he might shatter at a single wrongly-aimed touch. Minho’s mouth opens slightly, his two front teeth peeking out again just like yesterday, only now he looks like a concentrated bunny instead of a startled one.

With their faces this close, Jisung notices Minho’s right tooth is chipped the tiniest bit. Realising this is the closest he’s ever physically been to Minho; he can’t stop his eyes from wandering. With his breath held back, he takes in Minho’s full lips, the beauty mark on the left side of his sharp nose, sees the barely visible darkened, sunken skin under his eyes, probably from the lack of sleep and the exhaustion he’s been putting himself through. From this proximity, he can also see the layer of foundation on Minho’s skin, prominent especially around the sides of his face. It looks like there are the smallest bumps hidden with the makeup, and Jisung distantly wonders if they might be acne scars.

Jisung can’t imagine anyone else he’s a stranger to, staying with him after an emotional breakdown at a café, and he’s once again reminded Minho will never be- *could never be* just ‘anyone’, and he naively hopes Minho could feel the same way about him even if he doesn’t have the slightest clue how interwoven their fates are. How dependent their lives are on one another’s.

It’s just a track, Minho said to soothe Jisung’s worries, appease his fears. And while Jisung logically realises that to Minho, to every Minho, it really is nothing more, he wishes it could really be that easy.

They end up sitting at the same table again, not that they walked too far from it in the first place. The silence between them is occasionally interrupted by Jisung's quiet sniffles. Jisung's practically certain Minho's stealing glances at him, how could he not after what just transpired, but he doesn't feel like he's in a position to look back at Minho, so he just hypnotises his coffee cup on the table. Jisung's hands are hidden under the table, his fingers busy with squeezing the fabric of his jeans.

He has no idea what to do, how to carry this conversation forward, or rather how to even start a conversation again. What should the conversation be about, what else can he do other than just keep on apologising to Minho for making his life a living hell the past few weeks? The pudding is still there next to them. It doesn't seem like Minho's interested in taking it and Jisung, with his stomach in knots and head full of how he just fucked up, isn't either.

But... if Minho doesn't want to take the pudding and he doesn't want to talk to Jisung, then why is he still here? For how long does he intend to stay? Surely he has better things to do than keep Jisung company for no reason whatsoever. Even if the 'better things' are stressing over the choreography. Should Jisung try and bring up the topic? Or will it make Minho leave immediately?

Jisung's thoughts are just starting to run in circles when Minho quietly sighs in discontent.

He chances a glance in the older man's direction and finds him fiddling with his phone. Minho's looking at his phone screen like he's trying to figure something out. Then, to Jisung's surprise, he squints directly at Jisung with the exact same expression.

Instinctively, Jisung straightens in his chair.

From the elbow down, Minho puts his arms on the table, supporting his head with his cheek in his right palm. He rolls his eyes up, looking for answers to God knows what in the air. He brushes his little finger over his lips.

He looks back at Jisung and Jisung carefully raises his eyebrows in a silent question.

"Seojoon?" Minho finally asks like it makes any sense.

Jisung just blinks. He doesn't realise it, but he's not kneading the cloth of his trousers anymore.

“S...Sorry?” He asks after he finds his voice.

“No,” Minho dismisses without providing any explanation. “Right, no,” he murmurs to himself. After scrolling some more, he looks back at Jisung. “Doyoon, maybe?”

“Sorry... I don’t-“

“Maybe I should start from the last name,” Minho interrupts.

Jisung doesn’t know if he does it intentionally or by chance, but Minho’s phone tilts in a way that allows Jisung to read his screen, albeit with some reflections.

List of Most Popular Male Names in Korea (2019)

For some inexplicable reason, Jisung feels a pleasant shiver run down his spine and the corners of his lip twitch upwards.

Looking at Minho still frowning at his phone screen, Jisung can’t help but think how much of an enigma the beautiful dancer is. It seems like some parts of him are in direct contradiction. Man straight-forward enough to tell Jisung to fuck off, yell at him that he can keep his help to himself, chooses not to ask him for his name. For something so mundane. He can say so many unpredictable things, and yet he can’t seem to be able to ask the simplest question there is when meeting someone.

Jisung finds it endearing.

And it also occurs to him only now that this Minho really doesn’t know his name yet.

“Kim?” Minho asks, seemingly switching to the last-name-first tactic.

“It’s Jisung,” Jisung blurts out.

Minho looks at him with suspicion.

“My first,” Jisung quickly clarifies. “Not my last. My... My first name is Jisung. Han. Han Jisung.”

Minho’s blinking at him like he doesn’t understand, his bunny teeth poking out. “Your first name is *Hanjisung*?” He says in one breath. It’s impossible to tell whether or not he’s being serious.

“...Han is last,” Jisung explains.

Minho chuckles, his smile somewhat crooked on his face but not in a mean way. It suits him.

He makes a little noise of understanding, suppressed laughter slipping through the cracks.

“Well,” Minho breathes out. “Han Hanjisung-ssi-“

“Oh come on!” Jisung chastises him, without thinking about it. He can hear the tell-tales of a smile in his voice, too. “You know what I mean. Besides, you’re older,” Jisung takes a sip of his Americano, apparently his appetite has returned. “No need for formalities, Minho-ssi.”

“Hmm,” Minho hums in thought. “You really like to assume things, Hanjisung-ssi,” Jisung looks at him, wary. “That I like pudding, my name, then that I need help, then that I need help from *you*, now my age...” Minho lists.

Jisung’s looking at him with his breath held back, worried he disrupted the relatively normal atmosphere that’s just begun to set around them. He already has an apology ready at the tip of his tongue.

“But,” Minho looks back down. “I can’t really correct you when you’re right so...” and he lets Jisung fill in the blank.

Jisung thinks this is as far as he’ll ever get to Minho admitting he really does need help.

With an opening like that, there are so many things Jisung wants to ask. Did Minho really faint before his dancer-friends found him today? Was it the first time it happened? How long has he been exhausting himself because of the track? Does he drink every night? Does he really not eat like Hyunjin said?

But... when Jisung looks at Minho and sees him with his eyes bored into the tabletop, his fingers nervously fidgeting with the phone in his hands... it doesn’t seem fair to ask any of this. Minho doesn’t seem like a particularly sharing person, especially when it comes to his own interior, and Jisung should be grateful Minho’s allowing him to peek in this much.

“So...” Jisung begins, Minho’s apprehensive eyes immediately move to him. “Do you really like pudding?”

And Jisung considers it a small victory when Minho is the one left blinking at him, and finally smiling, although he still averts his eyes, the tips of his ear colouring slightly red.

"I'm willing to answer everything but that," he says seriously.

"But," Jisung whines, "that's the only thing I want to know!"

Minho just shrugs in response, "Tough-luck."

"Well, if you don't tell me, I'm going to assume you do," Jisung argues. "Based on the keychain," he vaguely nods at Minho's sports bag.

Minho glances at the bag too.

"Maybe I want to stay close to my enemy," he counters.

"It's pudding! What harm could it possibly do to you?"

Minho's eyes nearly bulge out of his head. "Are you serious?" He asks, and this time he sounds one hundred percent serious. "You've clearly never eaten more than ten cups."

"More than ten cups? That's a health hazard!"

"Amateur," Minho scoffs.

"So you admit you do like it?" Jisung challenges. "If you eat more than ten cups then..."

"No," Minho interrupts him easily, like 'no' is the only correct answer and no other option ever occurred to him.

"...No? Then why-"

"Just," Minho waves his hand. "Keeping my enemy closer."

Jisung's chuckle bubbles out of him before he can stop it. "Sure," he motions between them, Minho's presence alone somehow makes him feel bolder. "Is this also part of the same practice?"

Minho places his elbows on the table, interlocking his fingers in front of his face. He looks directly at Jisung like he wants to access his thoughts.

"I don't know, Hanjisung-ssi, are we enemies?"

“I mean,” Jisung scoffs, feeling a little self-conscious. “Do you have any reason to consider me anything else?”

Minho just silently nods like something’s just started making sense to him. “Assuming things again,” he says to himself, leaving Jisung puzzled.

Without further explanation, Minho reaches for the plastic cup with the pudding he’s been ignoring so far. Tearing off the aluminium lid, he begins to talk. Jisung listens with his breath held.

“I don’t know when exactly but some weeks ago, our dance practice professor played us some tracks, explained fuck-all, and told us to choose one of them that we liked the best,” Minho opens the plastic spoon, digging it into the gelatinous vanilla treat.

“We’re divided into dance teams in the class, and I ended up with Hyunjin and Yongbok – Felix – You probably... saw them this morning,” Jisung nods. “So we chose a song, for good two weeks it didn’t make any fucking sense why the professor showed us the songs in the first place, and then she showed up with this track and told us to make the final end-of-year showcase choreo around it.”

It’s true that all of their composition classes professors told them that there is a possibility whatever the students compose might be used across the university for promotion-purposes, but Jisung didn’t have the slightest fucking clue that their song could end up being someone else’s choreo track. This particular one wasn’t really composed with the idea of people dancing to it either...

“And I...” Minho continues, tearing Jisung away from his thoughts. He’s not meeting his eyes again, busying himself with the pudding. “I tried to do that and...”

“Couldn’t you, like,” Jisung tries. “ask for a different song or? We would definitely-”

Jisung abruptly stops himself, rather something inside stops him before he can say a... blatant lie really, because would they? Would they change the track if they received a complaint about it? Wasn’t Jisung the one adamant about it remaining the same way? About it being perfect the way it is? About not doing anything to it?

Minho sighs heavily, swallowing down a small spoonful of the dessert.

“We could,” Minho admits, but doesn’t provide any other details.

Jisung understands just as well without them. They could. But Minhو didn't want to.

Guilty, Jisung looks down at his coffee cup. "I'm sorry," he apologises. "If I knew I..."

"There's no need to apologise," Minhو says, the tone of his voice irradicating any chance of a counter-argument. "I understand you also knew fucking nothing about it being used as a potential choreo track."

Just when Jisung wants to voice his doubts, Minhو continues. "Look, I don't understand how music's made but you'd probably think about it differently if you knew, no? Fuck, even if you didn't then it's okay. You shouldn't have to cater to anyone's specific needs."

Jisung would argue that that's not true. Of course, he wants to have some personal integrity as a producer, but if he knew he was making a track for someone, then he would absolutely fucking try to cater to that person's needs, hello? He has no doubt Chan and Changbin would both agree with him here.

"I... I don't understand how dances are made but... I think there are songs you can and cannot dance to, no?" He tries, returning Minhو's own phrases back to him.

Minhو's looking back at him, reluctant. "...Well, technically you can dance to everything."

"Okay but," Jisung puts his hands up, apparently wanting to stop Minhو telepathically. "Some songs are probably more suitable than others, right?"

Still reluctant, and after he shifts his gaze from every corner of the room to the next one, Minhو nods.

"And I think what we've made is more on the... less suitable side," Jisung admits.

"But," Minhو argues, it looks like Jisung's words are not really registering in his head, so focused on his own failure. "That still doesn't make it your fault, that my head is fucking empty."

Jisung bites his lip.

"I think it does."

“But not to that fucking extent!” Minho suddenly raises his voice. Jisung startles in his chair.

“I mean, Jesus Christ, Jisung-ssi, I don’t-“ Minho appears to be reaching for his words, there is something incredibly guilty about his expression and Jisung’s heart squeezes at that. “I don’t want you to be so... *upset* about some fucking track,” he finally breathes out, looking to the side.

Jisung recalls Minho’s words from before. *It’s just a track*. Jisung recalls how his very first, in hindsight incredibly selfish thought was if only it was just a track, if only it was that simple. Did he completely fail to realise how it all might appear to Minho? Jisung’s emotional breakdown over a mere track? Did he not realise the amount of guilt it could- it *has* burdened Minho with?

Before Minho is concerned with himself, with how he probably should eat and drink and sleep, before he’s angry and yells at Jisung and curses him for presenting him with an unworkable track, before all of that, Minho is concerned with *Jisung’s* well-being, with how Minho’s ‘failure’ has affected him – the source of his troubles.

Jisung doesn’t know if Minho realises it, but... from what Jisung has seen, it looks like Minho *always* puts others before himself. And it didn’t even occur to Jisung that the reason Minho could be uncomfortable sitting with him at the same table is not because he has any resentment towards Jisung, but because he has resentment towards himself over how he made Jisung feel.

How is he even supposed to make amends? He can’t take back his stupid over-dramatic reaction, can’t take back bursting into tears, and convincing Minho he needs his help. He just wishes he could lessen the burden he cursed Minho with somehow. Should he tell him he overacted? But with everything Jisung knows, he wouldn’t be able to pass such an obvious lie for a truth.

The deadline for submitting their track is already over, has been for the last two weeks or so, but if they still have to make some changes to the track, it only makes sense that the date for submitting the choreography hasn’t already passed for Minho and his team, right?

“How much time do you have to finish the choreography?” Jisung asks, shifting the conversation away from his emotional outburst. There’s already a plan forming in his head, even though he doesn’t know yet exactly what it is.

For a few seconds, Minho's just looking at him with a subtle frown between his eyebrows.

"...One more week," he finally answers. "But it's not your-"

Jisung immediately follows up with another question. "And how long does it take to come up with a choreography?" He asks, since he has virtually no idea.

Minho's frown deepens but, again, he doesn't look angry, definitely not at Jisung, it looks more like he's not comprehending what Jisung's trying to achieve, and like the vaguest idea he might have doesn't appeal to him in the slightest.

"Jisung-ssi-"

"Would one week be enough?"

On a rational level, Jisung should be confused about what he's offering. What point is there in asking this? If he wants to suggest changing the track, all the changes will be ultimately undone come morning once the loop repeats. Or could changing the track be the answer from the loop? Could changing the track help keep Minho alive? There's no way he can tell for sure, but that's the case with everything in this fucking loop, so does it really make a difference?

Jisung decides that it doesn't.

"I'll change the track for you," Jisung suggests, he can't be sure of the outcome, yet his words sound more than decisive. What happens tomorrow might not count but what happens today, counts. It counts for this Minho. "I'll give you a new track you can actually choreograph to by this evening."

Minho appears completely stunned, the slight furrow on his face replaced by sheer puzzlement, his eyebrows climbing up his forehead.

"What genre do you normally do?" Jisung continues his rapid-fire interrogation without really realising it, he's already reaching for his backpack to take out his laptop and start making changes to the track right here and now. He wouldn't mind spending the rest of the day with Minho at the café, adapting the track to his, and his team's, wishes.

"You," Minho shakes his head in disbelief, his eyes filled with urgency when they search Jisung's. "You don't have to change anything I can-"

“I know I don’t have to,” Jisung says, rummaging through his backpack. For a small moment, he looks directly at Minhø. “I want to.”

Minho scoffs. Again, for someone so blunt he seems extremely reluctant to give requests.

“I can make some changes here,” Jisung goes on, still patting through the one large pocket of his backpack for his laptop. “You can tell me what parts you had problems with choreographing and we can-“

And that’s when it hits him. This morning, his head was filled with only finding Minhø, he went to school with that sole purpose, he didn’t consider going to any classes and he also didn’t consider bringing any equipment for the classes with him, did he?

Defeated, Jisung stretches the sides of the pocket of his backpack. Of fucking course he didn’t take his laptop with him. Of fucking course when Minhø’s finally sitting across from him in the morning, when they still have relatively enough time to discuss the godforsaken track, of course that’s when he doesn’t have the one piece of technology he usually carries everywhere. But well, there is nothing usual about this predicament in the first place, is there?

Jisung can’t help but sigh from the depth of his lungs, slumping against the backrest in exhaustion and suppressed anger at himself. “Fuck,” he curses under his breath.

“...Everything okay?” Minhø asks carefully. Jisung hates himself. Minhø most likely feels like he has to walk on eggshells around him to not set him off again.

Jisung unceremoniously throws his backpack to the café floor, his hands beginning to shake. “I left my fucking laptop at home,” he sighs.

Way to go, Jisung can’t help but think sarcastically. He offers a solution to Minhø only to come up literally empty-handed. Yes, he could go home and work on the track from there and actually deliver the finished product to Minhø by this evening, he doesn’t doubt that, but that would mean he’d have to leave Minhø behind and he just... he doesn’t want to do that.

He doesn’t want to walk away from Minhø, doesn’t want them to be separated. But... if it’s Minhø’s happiness he’d be working towards, even if it’s for a few minutes before the next loop inevitably takes

place, it would be worth it. Even though the idea of standing up and going home, leaving someone directly tied to him, someone directly unintentionally involved in Jisung's fuck up, hurts.

Minho's soft laugh rings through the silent space between them. When Jisung looks at him, he's hiding his smile in the crook of his elbow.

"So this was your plan all along, Hanjisung-ssi?" Minho asks, eyes crinkling, the skin around his eyes creasing with the most adorable lines Jisung thinks he's ever seen.

"W-What do you mean?" He asks, taken aback.

"I forgot my laptop at home'," Minho imitates, a lot whinier than Jisung remembers sounding, if he were to have any say in it. "Oh woe is me, guess now we'll have to go to my place to do the track thing there," Minho continues whining in his redemption of Jisung's voice.

Jisung's cheeks immediately colour. This is not what he meant at all!

He reaches for his backpack, stretches the pocket as far as it goes, showing it to Minho. "I really don't have it!" He defends, feeling the heat in his cheeks only intensify.

"If you show me your backpack it doesn't mean you didn't forget it intentionally," Minho counters, smiling.

"What!" Jisung cries. "How was I supposed to know I'd run into you and- and that we'd end up talking about the track?"

Minho shrugs in response.

"No idea, but you did know my name before I told you, sounds to me like you have your ways," Minho squints at him with suspicion but his lips are still melted in that trademark provocative smile Jisung's come to know in the previous loops.

Minho's damn perceptive, Jisung realises. He knows it's objectively most likely bullshit, but some of Minho's commentary makes Jisung feel like Minho could actually discover the nature of their relationship if he had enough clues.

"T-That's," It's only now that Jisung realises he could say he heard Minho's name from his dancer friends. "I-I heard-"

"It's okay, I don't mind," Minho breathes out. Once again, he makes it

sound like the only clear answer even though there is nothing clear about it. Even though it leaves Jisung baffled, to say the least.

“You- You don’t mind?” Jisung’s already found out it’s not in Minho’s personality to really explain himself, but he’s really hoping he’ll make an exception this time.

Almost as if Minho’s heard his thoughts, he does make an exception.

“I don’t mind this plan of inviting me over to your place,” he says, picking his sports bag from the floor to put it on the table instead. The plastic cup of pudding is empty, Jisung notices. “It’s one I haven’t seen before.”

Jisung’s left unmoving where he is, still sitting on the chair, holding his backpack closer to his chest. Meanwhile, Minho has stood up to his full height.

“Let’s go,” he says to Jisung, collecting the empty plastic cup with one hand.

“W-Where?” Jisung tries, squeezing the fabric of his backpack for support.

“To work on the track,” Minho clarifies like it’s no big deal. “Come on, or do you have any more classes today?”

Jisung dumbly shakes his head. Everything inside is screaming at him that his classes are really not the issue here. The issue is Minho... Minho suggesting they go to Jisung’s place? Jisung still can’t comprehend it. Is Minho not angry that Jisung’s tried to woo him into his apartment under the excuse of working on a track? Which! Is not the case at all but Jisung assumed if Minho assumed it was the case, then-

“Assuming things again, Hanjisung-ssi?” The way Minho seems to be able to read Jisung’s mind is getting downright concerning. If anything, shouldn’t it be the other way around, given the circumstances?

For the second time in less than one minute, Jisung dumbly shakes his head.

“Then let’s go,” Minho prompts again, throwing his sports bag over his shoulder, pushing his chair back towards the table.

“You,” Jisung starts, something in Minho’s self-assured way of acting makes him follow his actions, and he’s wobbly getting to his feet and pushing his own chair back before he knows it. “You really,” he swallows nervously. “Really don’t mind?”

“I don’t,” Minho says. He walks to throw away the pudding cup into the trash can near the café counter. Jisung follows him. “Guess you can consider your plan successful.”

“I didn’t have a-“

“That, and the pudding,” Minho jumps in without letting Jisung finish.

It’s amazing how one single sentence immediately makes Jisung feel closer to Minho. Makes him feel like he’s just managed to glimpse into Minho’s interior, more importantly, like Minho’s *allowed* him to have a glimpse.

“So you do like pudding,” Jisung says cheerfully.

“I will neither confirm nor deny,” Minho answers. Jisung notices him hiding the pudding keychain on his bag with his arm, a little self-consciously. Jisung doesn’t think there’s anything to be self-conscious about.

“Just have to grab my jacket from the practice room,” Minho explains right after they leave the campus café. Jisung didn’t really notice before, but Minho left with him for the café with only his short-sleeved practice t-shirt on. He must have been freezing the entire time.

Jisung glances at the oversized hoodie he’s wearing.

“Um... do you want-“

“I’ve seen *this* tactic before, Hanjisung-ssi,” Minho cuts him off, and, unsurprisingly, doesn’t explain further. Jisung thinks he understands anyway, and he just readjusts his backpack to have something to do other than look awkward at being indirectly called out.

“It’s... just Jisung,” Jisung tries to change the subject.

Minho looks at him.

“Okay, Jisung-ah,” he complies like he’s been calling Jisung that his entire life. Jisung’s the one who asked for it, but he inevitably blushes.

“You’ve,” now it’s Minho whose ears colour. “You’ve already heard what,” Minho vaguely waves his hand, “what the others call me so let’s go with that.”

Jisung lifts his eyes to look at Minho. The older man’s evidently trying his best to appear as unaffected as possible, but his ears are an immediate giveaway.

Feeling shy himself, Jisung gives him a small smile. “Okay... Minho-hyung,” Jisung tests on his tongue. If some words were puzzle pieces, this would be one of them.

Minho’s Adam’s apple jumps a little with the force of how vehemently he swallows. He makes an affirmative little sound and shakes his head like he momentarily forgot himself. Jisung guesses a topic change is coming.

“I’m keeping my jacket waiting,” Minho concludes, Jisung can’t help but chuckle. “She gets scared in front of strangers so wait for me here, Jisung-ah,” he finishes.

So many questions pop up in Jisung’s mind. Why is Minho’s jacket a ‘she’? Why does it matter if ‘she’ sees him now or before, he’ll still be a stranger to her? Somehow, Jisung doesn’t have any doubt Minho would entertain all those questions enthusiastically if he did ask them. Among those, more realistic questions appear; why does Minho not want Jisung to come with him to the dance studio? Why is Minho willing to go with him to his place? These, Jisung thinks, Minho would have a little harder time answering.

He doesn’t ask either. Only nods.

“Okay, hyung. I’ll wait here.”

Minho shows him a thumbs-up with the least thumbs-up-worthy facial expression before he disappears inside building 10 where the dance studio is. Jisung briefly wonders if Chan and Changbin are already there at the studio waiting for the professor to come deliver the disappointing news.

Jisung checks his phone. Surprisingly, it’s already 11:30. With Minho’s presence, time consistency just disappears from Jisung’s life.

He quickly types a message to both Chan and Changbin. It doesn’t surprise him they haven’t reached out to him yet, probably still preoccupied with talking to the professor.

11:31 AM Me:

im gonna work on the track tday

think ik what's wrong w it

or ill know anyway

Later, to explain why he knows about the track-problem though he hasn't been to the session with their professor, Jisung will just tell his hyungs the professor already emailed him about it or something, it doesn't really matter to him. His entire being is tuned to Minhoo, trying, and failing to contain his excitement, the anticipation buzzing through his veins.

In the morning, he wished for a day he could spend with him, just a few hours back it looked like something completely unachievable, and yet, by some twist of his fate, or their fates maybe, here he is... probably mere minutes away before it comes true.

Jisung pockets his phone. It's not nearly as cold now as it was when he was waiting at the entrance gate around 9 AM.

Oh, he realises when he looks up at the clearing sky above, that must be why; the rain has stopped.



"Fucking hell," Minhoo complains from where he's fiddling with the skillet that has certainly seen better days and the gas stove burner that honestly has no business existing in the 21st century. "Do you at least have some eggs?" He looks over his shoulder at Jisung.

Jisung has honestly no idea, and he can't really blame it on the time-defying experience of the last few days, he wouldn't know even before that.

Minhoo either has the decency to spare Jisung the embarrassment of looking through his fridge or he's terrified what he might find there, it's probably a bit of both, but Jisung takes the hint and shuffles to check the contents of the miniature fridge by himself.

It's a weird experience, feeling out of place at his own apartment and

yet somehow content at the same time, liking his peace and quiet, and yet not minding Minho bustling through his kitchen. Jisung's never invited Minho over before, God forbid, but it feels like... he belongs. And if Jisung allows himself to entertain the completely delusional thought forming in the back of his mind, like *they* belong.

Well, Minho would probably disagree, if the way he's scowling at Jisung's ancient kitchen equipment is anything to go by.

Right, he asked him to check the eggs, didn't he?

Out of everything that could possibly transpire after the door to Jisung's apartment closed behind them, Minho preparing lunch for both of them is honestly one of the last things Jisung pictured.

Yes, he might feel an undeniable pull towards the dancer, but that doesn't mean it's reciprocated, and Minho's actions – while he's being kind enough to follow Jisung here to ease the trouble he thinks he's caused him – do not particularly scream I-want-to-spend-time-with-you or anything of that sort. Or maybe that's just Jisung's inability to read social clues. Either way, he was under the impression Minho would rather be done with this whole changing-the-track business as soon as possible.

But then Jisung's stomach grumbled right when they entered his shoe-box apartment, and then Minho asked him if he had any food, and then Jisung replied that there might be some ramyun packet and the two slices of bread he hasn't eaten yet, and that was apparently all Minho needed to throw his sports bag along with his puffer jacket on the floor, making his way into Jisung's kitchen.

Just having toed his platform sneakers off, Jisung opens the fridge like Minho instructed. There are only three shelves in total, plus a freezer drawer at the bottom, and they are mostly vacant but, to Jisung's utter surprise, there actually is a plastic egg container with exactly two eggs remaining.

"What are you looking for in there?" Minho says irately, suddenly standing right next to Jisung, the fridge door the only thing separating them. "What's the hold-up?"

Jisung jumps a little where he's standing, or crouching. He reaches for the egg container.

"Um," he begins. "I have... two eggs," he confesses like it's his greatest sin.

Minho, with his arms crossed over his chest, raises an unimpressed eyebrow.

“Well I’ll be damned, two slices of bread and two eggs,” he sighs. “Is it just me or is there a pattern?” Minho asks, reaching his left hand out.

Jisung hands him the container.

“Any hope of vegetables? Two bell peppers or something?”

Jisung’s ears colour. He really should plan his groceries better; this is the one thing Chan nor Changbin can help him with because they are just as hopeless as he is when it comes to eating and cooking. Minho on the other hand, seems like he knows what he’s doing. He’s a dancer after all, has to take good care of his body, dieting included. And he certainly *looks* like he does take good care of his body...

Jisung shakes his head. His mind is all over the damn place.

“No? No vegetable?” Minho misunderstands.

“Nono, not that,” Jisung quickly explains, although he’s not sure if that’s true. He also doesn’t miss how Minho’s still just hovering by his side, not peeking into the fridge Jisung’s certainly not proud of. It’s one of the many silent kind gestures he’s shown. It warms Jisung’s heart.

On the top shelf, there is a plastic bag of some vegetable mixture thinly sliced, something Jisung can just quickly throw on the pan without any extra work, or *any* work at all for that matter. He gets the impression Minho usually works with better ingredients than these.

“There is this,” he says, self-conscious. When he reaches his hand with the bag to Minho, their fingers brush for a single second and it sends a bolt of electricity through Jisung’s spine.

Minho briefly looks at the bag.

“Okay, let’s use that,” he says easily, moving back to the kitchen counter. “Any soy sauce? Salt? Pepper? Two seasonings, you know.”

Suppressing the smile that wants to break through on his face, Jisung points above Minho’s head to the cupboard. “There ...I think,” he murmurs.

To reach the condiments, Jisung notices Minho rises on his tiptoes the

tiest bit. When he reaches his arm up the hemline of his black t-shirt rides up. Jisung has to remind himself not to stare at Minhø's exposed skin.

Contrary to popular belief and the oversized clothes he likes to wear, Jisung's not a total lazy homebody. Even though it's against his will, he gets dragged into the gym by his hyungs at least two times a week. He has no idea how bodies actually work when it comes to gaining muscles, still, as a dancer Minhø probably has to have a very strict gym routine, Jisung thinks. His body has to be built in ways Jisung's never could have (at least not with the effort he's willing to put in), but... the exposed skin around his hip just now looked... soft. Is that possible?

Thankfully Jisung's extremely inappropriate train of thought is interrupted by the sound of sizzling oil and shortly after that, he catches a whiff of a delicious, savoury smell.

His feet automatically carry him to Minhø's side to peek at what he's making. Now that they've both taken their shoes off, Jisung notices he's a good bit shorter than the dancer, and while Jisung's normally not fond of being short – that's why all his shoes are either platform shoes or have hidden insoles – he finds with Minhø he doesn't mind it.

Minhø seems focused on whatever he's preparing so Jisung allows himself to stare. And stare he does.

Here after exhausting himself to the bone at dance practice, after rushing through the biting cold air outside, here in Jisung's small, old, grimy kitchen, Minhø looks just as ethereal as he's always had. He's like a sculpture that came to life, yet somehow so natural. Jisung thinks Minhø's beautiful sharp nose is just as breath-taking as the little acne scars on his cheeks, his naturally pouty lips are as beautiful as his chipped front tooth. Jisung could spend an eternity just looking at him, admiring him. He desperately wants to put it into words too but feels like it's not his place to do so.

“Han-ah,” Minhø addresses him, still completely concentrated on cooking, or at least it appears that way. “You came to check out the food, or something else?” And Minhø's eyes are on Jisung like it's second nature to him, like he's been actually looking at him instead of the food the entire time.

Jisung fumbles with any remotely un-idiotic response, feeling the blood in his cheeks heating up. It's like Minhø knows exactly what to

say to make him flustered.

“I- I... uhm-“

“It’s okay,” Minho jumps to his rescue, eyes back on the skillet. “You can look,” he teases, throwing Jisung a quick wink that ends up with him blinking both eyes while a sharp smirk stretches across his soft lips. Jisung has to swallow down the coo it elicits in his throat.

“Not much to look at, though,” Minho murmurs, a little dejected. Jisung’s almost impulsive enough, almost dumb enough to immediately oppose, when he comes to understand Minho’s referring to the dish.

“Not much to look at? Are you crazy?!” is out of Jisung’s mouth before he can stop it when he sees the most appetizing japchae he’s seen in a long time, and certainly never in his own kitchen. Jisung feels like Minho must have brought a whole bag of ingredients with him somehow because there is absolutely no way he’s created this with the utter nothing Jisung’s provided him with.

“The Korean Royal Court would have had my head if I gave them this,” Minho scoffs, a self-deprecating laugh colouring his words.

“Fuck the Korean Royal Court!” Jisung counters. “Hyung, seriously, how the fuck have you made this?” He kind of wants to bury his head into the heap of noodles in the skillet to inspect the witchcraft that has no doubt gone into it.

“Jisung-ah, it’s literally ramyun with vegetable mixture and a fried egg on the side-“

“There is a fried egg too?!” Jisung’s honestly over the moon, this is the most filling dish he has had in days. He just realises he’s barely eaten anything due to the fucking loops.

“Well not now but there will be eventually,” Minho explains, he quickly looks at Jisung before he focuses on stirring the vegetable mixture and noodles with chopsticks. “You can fry an egg, right? Grab the frying pan over there,” he nods towards one of the cupboards.

As embarrassing as it is, Jisung had no idea he owned another frying pan, but there definitely is one when he opens the cupboard, Minho must have noticed it when he grabbed the soy sauce.

“And take off that fucking backpack, we’re not going anywhere,”

Minho adds.

We. Jisung likes the sound of that.

He shrugs off his backpack and puts it on the corner of the kitchen counter only to receive the sharpest most 'are-you-fucking-kidding-me' look he has ever seen on Minho's face, so he removes it to his bedroom floor, joining Minho at the stove half a minute later.

Rising on his socketed toes, Jisung successfully reaches for the frying pan.

A soft laugh comes from his left.

"Cute," Minho whispers under his breath and Jisung swears to God he must have heard wrong, his ears must be playing tricks on him, and his eyes and mind probably too.

"What are you looking at?" Minho counters without seemingly looking at Jisung himself. This guy probably has eyes on the sides of his head, too, most likely a useful asset for a dancer; to monitor everything around him. "Wash it, wipe it off, and then fry the eggs," he commands.

The redness of his ears captures Jisung's attention. Maybe... it wasn't just his imagination after all.



"Usually, there are no eggs in japchae or?" Jisung asks Minho when he's removing the second fried egg from the frying pan into the bowl overflowing with a generous serving of Minho's noodle and vegetable mixture coated in soy sauce.

Minho hums in agreement.

"And usually, people have different proteins than pre-packaged ramyun noodles in their kitchens," he shoots back. Jisung can't argue with that. "Seriously, you try lecturing me about eating habits next time," Jisung didn't think it was possible to hear an eye-roll, but apparently he just did.

There's no table in Jisung's kitchen, no chairs either. For an insane split second, Jisung considers inviting Minho to his bedroom so they can take a seat on his bed to eat the food, but he quickly dismisses it.

While Jisung's still trying to come up with where they should go and what type of dishware and utensils he should offer to Minho since he doesn't own any plates and only one fork he can't remember the location of, Minho leans against the kitchen counter with ease, holding the entire rusty skillet by its handle, using the chopsticks he used for cooking to grab the noodles.

Jisung jumps to sit on the kitchen counter, his feet dangling in the air. He supports the bowl with his left hand. Chopsticks halfway to his mouth, he's ready to take the first bite when he hears Minho gently clear his throat.

For a while, Jisung stares at Minho, at his perfect side-profile, at the balance in his body, at his small hand handling the chopsticks – he's using his right hand now – at the little bit of soy sauce that has stuck to the corner of his mouth, at the way he covers the bottom half of his face to discretely lick it off. They are both quiet, but it doesn't feel weird, it doesn't feel awkward, it feels like there is a gentle bubble surrounding them, separating them from the outside world, something they've created and something that stays without any words having to be spoken.

Until Jisung makes the peaceful quiet pop himself with an obnoxious moan that, unbidden, bursts from his throat with the very first bite he takes of the noodles. He could technically blame it on more or less starving himself the last few days, but the flavour sets fireworks off behind his eyelids.

Minho looks at him, slightly alarmed, with colour in his cheeks and, of course, in his ears.

"Careful, Jisungie," he chuckles but it sounds like he's not entirely sure if this is the tone of voice he should be using. "Your neighbours might get the wrong idea."

Jisung doesn't even have it in him to feel embarrassed, this japchae is absolutely deserving of sounds like that. He also doesn't miss the fact Minho just used the nickname he'd naturally adopted in the previous loop, even though in this reality they've technically known each other for a few hours or so. But then... in the previous loop they also knew each other about the same, didn't they?

"Let them, hyung," Jisung decides easily, stuffing his mouth some more which results in both his cheeks rounding the way they always do.

He senses Minho's eyes on him again but when he turns to look back at him, the dancer quickly averts his gaze to his own portion.

"What do you eat normally if some ramyun with soy sauce makes you make sounds like that, seriously," Minho wonders aloud.

Jisung thinks about it for a little bit, using the time to actually swallow all the noodles in his mouth.

"Like, convenience store instant noodles but just the way they come," he says. "Take out also, sometimes." Rather rarely actually, mostly when Chan and Changbin invite him to grab some food with them and go to either of their places, sometimes to Jisung's too. "Do you cook, hyung?"

Minho glances behind his shoulder with puzzlement, looking at the stove. With the same expression, like he's trying to make sense of what just happened, he turns to Jisung.

"I think I just did or was that not it?" He asks, serious.

"Fuck off," Jisung laughs, slapping Minho's shoulder without thinking about it. It makes a smile bloom on his face. "You know what I mean, like, do you cook often?"

"I try if I have the time," Minho answers. "It's cheaper than takeout, or convenience store instant noodles."

"Only if you know what you're doing," Jisung grumbles.

"Yeah," Minho doesn't oppose. "I've definitely eaten some chemical experiments back when I started living alone. But if you don't practice you'll be stuck with instant noodles your whole life," he chastises softly.

Jisung immediately latches on to the new piece of information.

"You live alone?"

Minho makes a thinking sound, rolling his eyes up. At this point, Jisung's pretty certain Minho does it every time he's trying to come up with an answer.

"Yeah, technically. With my siblings," and if that's not news yet again.

"You have siblings?"

Minho hums in agreement. “Three,” he specifies, like it’s a perfectly normal number of siblings to have and live with.

Jisung chokes on his noodles. What the fuck. So there are technically three other people as gorgeous as Minho? Or at least with the same gorgeous genes he has? For some reason, Jisung assumed he’d be a single child.

Before Jisung can ask any additional questions, Minho pulls out his phone from the pocket of his cargo pants and presents Jisung with the back of his phone case. Finally, after trying to decipher what exactly are the stickers on the dancer’s phone, Jisung sees six stickers of cats, most of them more or less sun-bleached.

“That’s them,” Minho says while Jisung blinks at the phone case. “Soonie, Doongie, Dori,” Minho explains, pointing to each cat respectively.

There’s a few things to unpack here. First of all, how devastatingly adorable is it that Minho has his cats on his phone case, that he has custom-made fucking stickers of his cats on his phone case. Also how adorable is it that he has cats in the first place. That he has *three* cats! And that he refers to them as his siblings with the most genuine face and tone ever. It’s like there’s no doubt in his mind that they really are his family.

“I... see,” Jisung sighs, desperately trying not to coo at the older man.

Minho just nods.

“Well, I have two siblings,” Jisung says, reaching for his phone in the pocket of his hoodie. “Only got a picture of one of them, though,” Jisung opens his gallery and quickly scrolls through the pictures until he finds the least blurry picture of Bbama.

“Here, that’s Bbama” he shows the picture to Minho.

Minho makes a little sound of acknowledgment, like a prolonged ‘ooh’, nodding his head.

“Cute. Fluffy,” he evaluates, Jisung has to hold back a chuckle. It’s painfully obvious he’s a cat person. “What about the other one?”

“Oh, that’s my older brother,” Jisung explains, pocketing his phone. “Human. Nowhere near as interesting.”

Two dimples appear on Minho's face as he goes back to eating the japchae.

Within less than three minutes, Jisung finishes the rest of his bowl, taking sips of water Minho so kindly poured him into the only available mug he has, reminding him to drink between bites.

"That was so fucking good," Jisung whines, reaching for every last scrap of noodle or vegetable sticking to the sides of the bowl. "Hyung, what do I have to do to convince you to cook for me again?" He asks, still apparently on some kind of food-high, or maybe Minho-high would be more accurate.

Minho pretends to think for a while. "Maybe," he turns to Jisung with a sparkle in his eye. "Make less-shit tracks and I shall consider."

Jisung wants to be offended, but he simply can't. He thinks he's already come to understand Minho's sense of humour, or sense of talking in general, and he knows there's no malicious intent behind what he's said. Besides, Jisung can't really argue with that, can he? He, and Chan and Changbin too, genuinely had no idea they were supposed to make a danceable track, and what they presented definitely wasn't danceable.

That doesn't mean he can't tease back, though.

"Maybe I'm okay with instant noodles after all," Jisung says, tilting his head down to hide the smile tugging at his lips.

He hears Minho gasp in mock shock. "Me and my puffer jacket are leaving, clearly our presence is not desired here," he informs, setting the skillet, still half-full, down on the kitchen counter.

Jisung plays along, catching Minho's wrist in some rendition of star-crossed lovers from a K-drama.

"No, please," he cries. "I've changed! I can't let you go!"

"And you mean me or the japchae?"

Jisung considers for a second too long, looking between his empty bowl, the skillet, and Minho.

"You little," Minho threatens, trying to break free of Jisung's hold, without any real strength behind it, Jisung's pretty sure if Minho really wanted to, he could walk away without much physical effort.

Emboldened by their antics that somehow feel so natural, Jisung moves his hands higher, now circling Minho's arm above his elbow. Minho has just the thin, crew-neck t-shirt on, Jisung's directly touching his skin with his palms, the most he has ever touched him, he can feel Minho's solid muscles hidden beneath the layer of soft, pliant skin.

He looks up at Minho, putting on his best kicked-puppy, or maybe in Minho's vocabulary kicked-squirrel eyes.

"Please, baby," Jisung whines, tugging on Minho's arm a little. "You can't leave when we just met each other," he says, feeling a pang in his heart when he has to force himself to ignore how much truth the words hold.

He's shocked to see the playfulness gone from Minho's face. Jisung feels like panicking, apologising maybe, but then a dark shade of red seeps through Minho's façade, starting with his ears and going down his neck, touching his collarbones, disappearing behind his t-shirt. Jisung wonders how far it goes, if Minho's chest is dusted red, maybe his belly, too.

The atmosphere around them shifts, suddenly heavy with something Jisung's too afraid to give a name to.

As if burnt, Jisung quickly lets go of Minho's arm.

"S-Sorry," he stutters out, feeling just as affected as Minho looks. "I didn't realise- I, um," he's searching for words, coming up with nothing.

What is he supposed to say without sounding like a creep? I didn't realise I'm a stranger to you? I didn't realise you don't know me? Fuck, Jisung doesn't understand while he still thinks about Minho as if he knew him in the first place. They've never got to know each other, really. They've talked for a few hours at best. But something about Minho just... something about him just makes Jisung feel like he does know him. Even though it's just wishful thinking.

"Do you want the rest?" Minho asks, nodding at the skillet, he tries to shift the air in the room from whatever direction it's gone to, but Jisung can hear the slight waver in his voice. "I'm full already," he explains.

Jisung wants to refuse, he clearly remembers Hyunjin saying Minho hasn't been properly eating, and this is his own food he prepared, for

fuck's sake, he really shouldn't-

Jisung stomach doesn't seem to agree with his thoughts. It grumbles and that's apparently all Minho needs to scrape the rest of the noodles into Jisung's bowl.

"Hyung," he tries, careful. Minho meanwhile takes to washing the skillet in Jisung's sink. It feels like Jisung should protest, demand Minho eats some more, but... he doesn't think Minho would want to hear that. He doesn't look... he's not the type of person who would do something for himself just because someone told him to.

"Hm?" Minho inquires, sending Jisung a brief look.

Jisung just shakes his head.

"Thank you," is what he decides on.

With ears and the back of his neck coloured red, Minho goes back to washing the skillet.

"Give me that," he demands, one hand stretched in the direction of Jisung's empty mug. When Jisung hands it to him, Minho silently fills it with the tap water and gives it back to him.

"If the track doesn't suck," Minho starts, talking to the kitchen sink. "Then no later than at 12 tomorrow because that's the normal time for lunch, if we go by what the majority's decided anyway."

It takes some time for Minho's words to register in Jisung's brain, he has to go back to what they were talking about before Jisung grabbed Minho by his arm.

"What do I have to do to convince you to cook for me again?"

At first, Jisung wants to smile, wants to soak in the warmth of Minho's words, of how fucking easily he re-introduces the topic Jisung felt so calm about before he went and ruined it. It's like a peace offering from the older man. And somehow, Jisung can't really imagine Minho deciding the track sucks, even if he did think that he would probably keep it to himself, stubbornly selfless as he is, offering to come back to Jisung's apartment and cook for him, without any time limit other than the starting point; *tomorrow*.

And it's this same word that shatters whatever illusion Jisung's heart has begun to paint without acknowledging the reality. The reality that

there is no tomorrow for him. There is no tomorrow for them.
‘Tomorrow’ Minho is going to have no idea who Jisung is. It’s going to be like they never met, because they didn’t, nowhere else except in Jisung’s mind.

Minho’s voice wakes him up.

“Jisungie?” He asks, voice full of unsuccessfully hidden concern.
“Everything okay?”

Jisung blinks away the water that’s started pooling in his eyes. There’s no way he could explain crying over something like this. Over having Minho in his kitchen, over Minho offering to prepare lunch for him. Minho’s probably already come to the conclusion that Jisung’s worryingly emotional, but there is only so much he can take.

Minho’s eyes seem to glitter in the sunlight filtering through the curtain-less window in Jisung’s kitchen, his lips opened with the rest of what he wants to ask but is too considerate to voice.

Jisung recalls what he wished for the most this morning. He wanted to spend this day with Minho. He recalls what he wished for when they were at the café. He wanted to take away Minho’s pain and exhaustion by giving him something he could work with. Now, here Minho is. Next to Jisung. In his kitchen. Looking at him with sadness he tries and fails to conceal, and it’s because of Jisung again. He’s wasting away the time he could spend with Minho, wasting it away by making him sad and concerned.

Jisung snuffles, shaking his head with a smile.

“Sure,” he reassures Minho. “Thank you for the food,” maybe he can convince him to eat some more if he says he’s already full at some point further in the day.

He doesn’t even have to force the sounds of pure pleasure out of his throat when he gets to taste the noodles again.

“At 12 tomorrow then,” Jisung says. He sees Minho smile and nod in return. “If the track doesn’t suck, right?”

Minho chuckles.

“Yeah, if the track doesn’t suck,” he echoes.

Jisung insists he could help Minho with the dishes but Minho scolds

him that there's no way he could balance the bowl and chopsticks in his hands *and* wash the dishes at the same time. Minho also scowls at the three-quarterly finished bowl of noodles when Jisung hands it to him, complaining he can't eat anymore. Minho finishes the bowl anyway, explaining he can at least wash it right away.

It's well into the afternoon when they make their way into Jisung's bedroom to have a look at the track. Jisung can feel his heartbeat inside his throat, his stomach in knots. This is the closest space he's shared with Minho. He allows the calm, easy air around the dancer to soothe his nerves. That, and the redness in his ears.

There might not be tomorrow, but there is definitely today.

And Jisung will be damned if he lets it slip through his fingers.



Jisung's bedroom is a goddamn mess. His bed is not made, the carpeted floor is littered with clothes, there is a little dent in the wall from where his phone hit it when he threw it there in the morning. The paper box and two plastic bottles of his pills are lying next to the bed. Jisung can't even remember if he took his pills today, but he sees the blister dangling next to his laptop at the very edge of his bedside table, so he probably did, otherwise, it wouldn't be out of the box.

There's also the fact he doesn't have any desk they could sit at, or any chairs to begin with. He must look like a total loser in Minho's eyes, one who's probably drug-addicted on top of that

"Sorry," he whispers to Minho, too embarrassed to speak any louder, bringing his right hand to sheepishly rub at the back of his neck.

Minho casually strides forward to the pill containers. He crouches down, perfectly balanced.

"Hyung, it's not-" Jisung defends himself, aware of how this must look.

"This belongs on the floor? Or where do you normally keep it?" Minho asks simply, collecting the paper box and the two plastic bottles from the floor. It doesn't look like he's even read the labels, it honestly seems like... it doesn't matter to him. Again, Jisung doesn't know if he does this to save him any more embarrassment, but he's extremely grateful for the lack of chastising or judge-y comments.

Jisung points to his bedside table. "In... the drawer there," he says.

Surprisingly, Minhó's knee joints crack when he stands up, supporting his body weight with his hands against his thighs. Jisung would have expected a little more... agility from someone as athletic as him. It just goes to prove there are many things he still doesn't know about Minhó.

"This one's from here?" Minhó shakes the blister of pills and the paper box in Jisung's direction.

Jisung nods. Minhó doesn't say anything else, returning the blister to where it belongs.

"Can I open the drawer?" He asks, still keeping both his hands to himself, preoccupied with not spilling the containers.

"Oh, yeah, sure," Jisung finally makes himself useful, crossing the distance between him and Minhó in two strides and opening the bedside drawer for him. He doesn't have anything to hide in there. And if he did, he probably wouldn't care if Minhó was the one to see it.

Minhó deposits the box and bottles in the drawer.

"What about the clothes?" He asks, looking at Jisung with a neutral expression.

Jisung looks around the floor. If he remembers correctly, these are just clothes he pulled out of the closet when he was deciding on what to wear, it should probably all be clean.

"Um, the closet," he says.

Minhó nods, lips pursed like he's thinking about something.

"Wrong," he says so easily it startles Jisung. "The laundry, since it was on the floor," the statement doesn't leave any room for debate.

"Okay," Jisung squeaks out. "Should I?" he motions towards the messy clothes.

"You should," Minhó tells him.

Jisung collects all the clothes from the floor, throwing it inside the washing machine in the small bathroom that is directly connected to his bedroom.

Seemingly, Minho manifests from the thin air just when Jisung's about to turn the washing machine on.

"Detergent?" He questions.

Jisung carefully looks to the side where the only bottle of detergent he's maybe ever bought sits empty. If he shakes the bottle hard enough maybe there could be a few drops left.

He bends down to retrieve it from the floor when Minho's quiet presence startles him again.

"Use this" Minho suggests, throwing something inside the washing machine. However, his aim is apparently not the best because he misses, and a laundry detergent pod rolls to Jisung's feet, he throws it in with the laundry. It must have manifested along with Minho or something because there is no way it came from inside Jisung's apartment.

"Where did you-" He wants to question, but Minho interrupts him by slamming the washing machine door shut and effortlessly turning the thing on.

"Okay, let's go," he decides, turning on his heel to head back to Jisung's bedroom. Jisung follows him.

When they're both standing on the carpet instead of the linoleum in Jisung's bathroom, Jisung notices Minho's sports bag next to the bed, the side pocket is open, and Jisung can only assume the detergent pod is from there. It makes his lips curl with a small smile.

"Minho-hyung," he addresses Minho's back. "Can the cooking session come with a cleaning session too?"

"Wow," Minho scoffs, looking at Jisung over his shoulder with his sparkly eyes. "The requirement hasn't been met yet and here you are asking for more. Greedy Jisungie," he tuts.

Jisung ignores the absolutely deafening thud of his heart that reverberates through both his ears at the last two words.

"The requirement will be met!" He challenges.

Minho's lips stretch with his lopsided smirk. "Confident, are you, producer-nim?"

Jisung finds himself smirking back. "Let's just say I know what I'm doing," and Jisung honestly thinks it's true, at least when he's not drowning in a creative slump.

He might not know what he's doing with most of the things in his life, but when it comes to music, he is in his element. That's the main reason why he's typically so adamant about not making any changes to his tracks. Definitely not right away when someone demands it. He has to wait for the right moment, for the muse to strike. And now, that he's got the muse physically there with him, there's no doubt in his mind he'll be able to deliver something befit of Minho, and the rest of his dance team.

"Let's just say I'll be the judge of that," Minho doesn't back down.

But neither does Jisung.

"I'd hope so."

Jisung picks up his laptop from the bedside table. Making himself comfortable on his bed, he places it on his thighs.

He realises Minho's still kind of hovering close to the bed. Oh fuck. Oh shit. They are going to have to share the bed, aren't they? He's definitely not going to make Minho sit on the floor.

"S-Sorry," he stutters, scooting over to the right side. He scrambles for his plushies and extra pillows, moving them to the side so Minho has somewhere to sit. "I don't typically have people over," he starts, not realising he's about to talk himself into a perfect ditch. "And when I do they don't, um, mind sharing the bed, so--"

Minho lets out an excited whistle. The mattress sinks under his weight when he finally sits down, though he remains positioned kind of sideways; the lower half of his body turned away from Jisung, his feet still touching the floor.

"So they don't mind sharing the bed," Minho muses aloud, and it hits Jisung only now how what he said left a lot more space for interpretation than he'd like to.

"Not like that!" He cries. "I meant, like, with my hyungs--"

"With your hyungs??" Minho gasps, scandalised. "Jisungie, wouldn't peg you as that type..."

Jisung shoves Minhø's shoulder, the older man just cackles through it.

"I meant like for a sleepover or," – he catches the suppressed maniacal laughter on Minhø's face – "You know what, I'll just shut up."

While Jisung sulks with his face completely red, Minhø's laughter just bubbles over. His voice is high, airy, he wheezes from time to time, and it doesn't help with how rapidly Jisung's heart beating.

"I'm sorry, Jisungie, but you literally walked into that one," Minhø gets out between giggles, wiping a single tear from his eye.

Jisung bites down on his bottom lip to keep his own smile at bay.

"And I can walk you out of the apartment, you know?" He threatens.

Minhø looks amused, his eyes crinkling. Then he once again looks towards the ceiling, reminiscing about something.

"Well, who says I mind sharing the bed," he settles on, raising one eyebrow at Jisung. He doesn't sound that convincing with his blushing ears and his legs still on the floor, though.

"Then sit on it properly, aish," Jisung demands, slamming his hand against the empty mattress right next to him. "You have to be able to see the screen anyway, so," he adds more quietly.

Minhø listens to him, stretching his legs out on the bed, moving his entire body closer to Jisung's. The bed is not exactly big, it's as big as Jisung's budget allowed at the time of moving, so they have to squeeze together, and Jisung didn't quite calculate the risks of that.

The dancer's sculpted thigh brushes against Jisung's. Minhø's legs are still covered by the fabric of his trousers – of fucking course they are, why wouldn't they be – but Jisung can see the stark size difference between them. While his legs are thin and admittedly weak, Minhø's legs are thick and strong. He has placed his hands in his lap probably to avoid touching Jisung more than necessary, and Jisung can't miss how his thighs just... sit together like that. Whoever decided to declare the thigh gap one of the beauty standards has clearly never seen Minhø.

"That's where the magic happens?" Minhø asks, pointing to the laptop screen still loaded on the log-in page.

Jisung seriously has to do something with his short attention span.

Embarrassed at being more or less called out, Jisung quietly logs in, trying his damndest to not let Minhoo's giggles distract him.

The audio program is already opened, he must have been working on some other track yesterday. He doesn't remember it too clearly, the real 'yesterday' feels a long time ago.

Minhoo lets out a little sound of admiration when he sees the audio program for the first time. To Jisung, it's already second nature, but to someone without any experience, the number of different track lines, added effects, cuts, time displays, etc. most likely looks fascinating. In Jisung's opinion, it looks way more complicated than it really is.

"Right, so the one we gave you is," Jisung thinks aloud, opening the file.

When it loads up, Jisung presses the space bar, turning to Minhoo with the unspoken question evident on his face.

The gentle strings at the beginning of the track sound through the otherwise quiet bedroom. For a brief second, it teleports Jisung back to this morning, finding Minhoo defeated on the floor with Hyunjoo and Felix by his side, the same sound in the background.

Minhoo quickly nods his head three times. "That's the track," he confirms. Jisung can see the most minuscule movements in Minhoo's body as if his muscle memory automatically activates with the beginning chords.

"The beginning's okay," Minhoo continues. "I came up with... *something* at least," he says the word with disdain. "But then it just repeats and it's..."

Jisung nods, already forming a plan in his head how to shuffle the bits around, what other bits to add, to take away, to make the song suitable for dancing. Originally, he wanted to attach some lyrics to it, that's why the instrumental is simple. Chan and Changbin naturally contributed to the track, they've collectively decided to make this one more peaceful, especially compared to the previous rather beat-heavy tracks they've submitted.

"Can you maybe," Jisung wonders, stroking his bottom lip in thought. "Show me what you came up with for the beginning? I could start building from there," it's out of his mouth before he realises it.

First of all, it could come across as rude because who is he to tell

Minho what to do, especially if Minho's not comfortable with it? And second of all, it belatedly occurs to him that he has never seen Minho dance.

Minho looks at him, slightly taken aback. Jisung's probably fucked up.

"You don't have to!" he tries to quickly make amends.

"No, I guess it makes sense," Minho says, he doesn't sound offended, thank God. "But it's really not much," somehow, Jisung doubts that.

The dancer stands from the bed, goes to stand to the side of it, there is enough space since Jisung's bedroom consists really only of the bed, the bedside table, and the closet on the other side of the room.

"Can you play it from the beginning?" Minho asks, motioning with his finger to rewind the song.

Jisung focuses his eyes back on the laptop screen. When he looks back up, Minho's no longer standing. Jisung has to scoot back to be able to see him.

Minho's supporting himself on one crouched leg, the other, his left, perfectly stretched to the side. There's no doubt he can hold himself- he is probably holding himself in such a strainful position with his legs alone, but his fingers lightly touch the floor too.

With breath held back, Jisung presses play, sensing the trajectory of his life is about to change.

There's no point using words to describe what unfolds in front of Jisung's eyes with the first move that flows through Minho's body. He's like water, resonating with the music pouring out of Jisung's speakers. His limbs gracefully, weightlessly glide through the air along with the melody, the momentum seamlessly dissolving exactly where it needs to go, different parts of Minho's body move separately, and yet it looks like they are perfectly connected, in absolute sync, coming together as a whole.

And Minho called this 'something'? Surely he has to have some choreographies he's really proud of, right? Jisung's terrified to find out what they look like. He can't imagine anything that could surpass what Minho's just shown him.

"Think you can start building from here, producer-nim?" Minho asks, back on his feet again. Jisung can see his chest rising and deflating,

his mouth a little bit more open, but he doesn't sound out of breath.

Jisung should probably joke back. *I might need to see more, dancer-nim*, or something similar, but he's completely enthralled, the expressive choreography still flashing in front of his eyes while he's trying to refocus back on Minhø, trying to see him as an older classmate from the same university, a hyung who came over to help him change the track. However, everything else he's learned about him so far obstructs and at the same time complements the Minhø in front of him, the idea that every Minhø he's ever come across and that he's going to come across can transform into pure fluidity like this with nothing more but one press of Jisung's finger, with the music he's created... it's too much for his brain to comprehend.

The indescribable experience of witnessing Minhø dance, along with his musical intelligence kicks in, sending jolts through Jisung's arms right into his fingertips. He feels them twitch against his keyboard, against the touchpad.

Minhø joins him on the bed, peeking over Jisung's shoulder to look where all the sudden clicking and typing is coming from.

Letting Minhø's motions bring the vision of his chords to life, Jisung begins reforming the track.

Time consistency once again falls victim to the beautiful dancer.



After a not-further-specified while – where seconds, minutes, and maybe hours completely escape him – there's a light touch on Jisung's shoulder. He has to force himself to come back from whatever hypnosis he's been under, has to remind himself that he can actually look left and right, and not only straight forward at his laptop screen with the audio program opened.

The audio tracks look vastly different than the last time he saw them.

With his finger hovering just above the scroll wheel of his mouse, which he has apparently taken out of the drawer at some point, Jisung slowly but surely begins to decipher that he's the one responsible for changing the track, it didn't just change by itself.

Of course, he changed it, he recalls. He wanted to change it for Minhø.

Oh god, Minhø.

Jisung's just most likely wholly ignored him for God knows how long, submerged in his silly music.

Jisung carefully turns his head to the side, it's like he's re-learning how to use his own body again. It happens to him almost without fail when the muse strikes him like a lightning bolt from the clear sky. Only this time, the lightning bolt is standing right next to his bed, looking at him.

Jisung can't not notice how small Minhø's hand looks when it brushes against his shoulder. He still has his oversized hoodie on, Minhø's fingers gently lying against the soft fabric.

Tearing his eyes away from the sight, which for some reason makes him think of how Minhø's hand would look if it curled into the fabric, Jisung's gaze slowly climbs up to the dancer's face.

Minhø's handsome features are creased with reluctant worry as if he doesn't want to alarm Jisung but can't quite fight the emotion down.

When their eyes finally meet, Minhø's immediately sparkle. Jisung wonders if he's aware of that, wonders what reason could there be behind it.

A small smile makes its way onto Minhø's lips. "Jisungie," he says, so devastatingly soft and calming. "It's already dark outside. You should eat something."

Jisung turns over his shoulder to the window next to his bed, half expecting to see the daylight and simultaneously mapping out the artificial light his room is now showered in.

Minhø didn't lie, it really is dark outside.

They got to Jisung's apartment at, what, 1 PM? Maybe sooner? Jisung can't remember. How long has he been out? How long has he left Minhø, as his goddamn guest and the person he wanted to spend his day with, to his own devices? And... why hasn't Minhø left yet? Why is he still here?

Jisung's heart squeezes in his chest at the possibility of Minhø leaving, and he immediately turns back to look at him. Minhø gives him another small smile, raising his eyebrows a bit, maybe in a silent question, maybe in a silent answer.

His left hand reaches out, his right one still on Jisung's shoulder, and

it's only now that a mouth-watering smell registers in Jisung's brain.

"Come on, have some," Minho urges him, his voice devoid of any pressure.

Jisung feels his eyes physically bulge out when he looks down to see possibly the best-looking bowl of bibimbap he's ever laid his eyes on.

Minho makes a little hum in his throat, thrusting the bowl further towards Jisung. Clumsily, Jisung catches it with both hands, balancing the chopsticks neatly lying at the top to stop them from toppling over.

"What," he breathes out, it scratches in his throat. He's holding the bowl like it's an alien object even though it's the very same bowl he ate the japchae from. "Hyung, what?" Jisung says with a little more urgency, turning to Minho.

The older man looks as nonchalant as ever. He raises his brow, now definitely in question.

"What?" he echoes monotonously.

Jisung fishes for words in his throat, ideally to string them into sentences. His mind is still catching up with everything that has happened while he was busy with the track remodelling.

"Did you just- did you just make this?" He squeaks out, almost offended. "Just like that? Just now?"

Minho scoffs, his eyes a little unsure. "Well, it didn't make itself," he settles on.

Jisung's absolutely dumbfounded. He has left this guy alone, in his apartment, after he more or less invited him over, only to escape into his music land, and what did Minho do? He made dinner. Jisung has no doubt Minho's probably tried to talk to him at some point only for Jisung to ignore him in his producer mode. Minho could- Minho *should* have gotten offended but he... he made him dinner instead. With what ingredients Jisung's left to wonder. He *maybe* had some rice in his pantry, but definitely no vegetables, no beef.

Somehow, he wouldn't be surprised if Minho brought all the ingredients necessary in his sports bag, but he's pretty sure Minho actually went out of his way to go to a supermarket. Most likely bought all of this with his own money. He spent money to make dinner for Jisung, spent time to make dinner for Jisung.

‘You didn’t have to’, ‘You shouldn’t’ or something along those lines is almost out of Jisung’s mouth when he moves his eyes from the bowl back to Minho. Jisung’s already learned Minho’s skilled at keeping a poker face, one that can make him look no short of intimidating when he’s still a stranger to someone. But Jisung also thinks he’s beginning to pick up on some signs that give away the interior Minho’s trying to keep intact.

The red ears for one. Jisung thinks Minho could be a very convincing liar if it wasn’t for the tips of his ears instantly revealing how he’s really feeling. But there are other things, too. He seems to blink a little faster, seems to focus his eyes on one particular spot, tries so hard to remain unbothered, his features schooled so neutral there’s nothing neutral about them in the end.

For whatever reason, it’s like he doesn’t like to express his thoughts and feelings openly, but they still affect every single one of his acts. Maybe it’s arrogant of Jisung to assume he understands how Minho feels, who Minho is, but in this very moment he knows with unwavering certainty it’s not ‘You didn’t have to’ or ‘You shouldn’t’ that Minho wants to hear.

“Thank you,” he says instead, meaning it with every fibre of his being.

Minho looks startled for a moment, blinking rapidly.

Then he makes a non-committed sound. “Sure. I have to have something in that fridge to work with tomorrow,” he says, like it’s no big deal. “Scoot over,” he nudges Jisung with his elbow, picking up the skillet he’s apparently temporarily placed on the bedside table.

Jisung listens, shuffling to the right side of his bed to make room for Minho, the mattress once again sinking under the dancer’s weight.

For a crazy second, Jisung wonders if he could carry Minho or if his legs would buckle under his weight the same way his mattress sinks. His traitorous brain supplies a scenario of Minho carrying him instead and he has to physically shake the thought out of his head.

“What? Not to your liking?” Minho asks easily, pointing his chopsticks at the bowl in Jisung’s hands.

“No! I mean, yes! V-Very much to my liking,” Oh god, that’s not exactly a phrase he should use with the vision of Minho bridal-carrying him still vivid in his mind. So, flustered, he attempts to change the topic. “I-I changed the track.”

Chewing his smaller portion of the kimbap, – which makes him look so much like a bunny it's ridiculous and very bad for Jisung's heart – Minho looks at him.

“Just now?” he asks.

“Just now. Well, in the last few.... hours?” Jisung asks, his voice pitching up at the end. “I don't know how much time's passed, I'm sorry I shouldn't have just-“

“Then play it, producer-nim” Minho interrupts him. “And eat,” he chastises in the same breath.

“Right, sorry. Um,” holding his chopsticks between his fingers, Jisung presses the spacebar key, and proceeds to distract himself with stuffing his cheeks right away, always somewhat embarrassed when someone listens to his tracks for the first time. Make that times ten when that someone is Minho.

The music comes pouring out of his laptop speakers. From the corner of his eye, he notices Minho's head moving back and forth on the beat, probably unaware he's doing it. It makes Jisung smile, but he quickly hides it in his shoulder.

Minho looks just as entranced at hearing the melody as Jisung was while creating it. His brows are furrowed in concentration and there's a sort of eager expression on his face, something like a satisfied scowl, if that is even a thing.

Jisung feels disgustingly proud of himself. Again, he knows he's good at what he does but seeing the effect of it on Minho, seeing he clearly likes the track Jisung's made for him even before it's done playing... it inflates his ego.

“Do you like it?” Jisung asks when the track finishes, also halfway done with his bowl.

Minho squints his eyes at the laptop screen. He makes a thoughtful sound. “It will do,” he says, uninterested, clearly trying to provoke.

When his comment doesn't spark any reaction, he looks at Jisung with the same expression on but there's a smirk tugging at his lips.

“Aish,” Jisung scoffs, rolling his eyes. He smacks Minho on his shoulder, forgetting how solid every part of his body is. “You're a brat, do you know that?”

"I'm older than you!" Minho exclaims in offense, giggling through it.

"That's not mutually exclusive!" Jisung meets him at the same level of offense, then he turns back to his laptop, pouting. "Guess I'll delete it then."

And Minho starts just straight up cackling at Jisung's antics.

Jisung has to bite back his own laugh.

"You're laughing at my hard work! I'm ready to delete it and you're laughing!" His words lose the desired effect when he's laughing himself.

"I literally said it will do!" Minho defends himself, playing along.
"What more do you want?"

"I don't know! A thank you, maybe?"

Minho rests the nearly empty skillet on his thighs, Jisung doesn't miss the way the skillet doesn't wobble once, Minho's thighs more than enough to hold it completely steady.

The dancer rests his palms near his groin, twisting his upper body to face Jisung.

With a completely serious face, he bows his head.

"Producer Han Jisung-nim, thank you for bestowing this genius creation upon me. I truly am not worthy of-" Jisung throws one of his smaller pillows at Minho, the dancer dodges it perfectly.

"You're impossible!" Jisung whines, rewarded with Minho's beautiful high-pitched giggles.

"You're sending me mixed signals here, Jisungie," Minho whines back.
"I did what you asked me to."

"You know this is not what I wanted," Jisung complains, snatching the pillow back.

"Assuming again," Minho clicks his tongue.

Jisung continues pouting at his laptop, his cheeks puffed out, mouth puckered up.

Minho pokes his left cheek, the tip of his finger easily sinking into

Jisung's mouldable skin. He remembers how Minho did something similar in the previous loop, thinks Minho might have a thing for his cheeks, a body part Jisung's always been quite insecure about.

"Hey," Minho breathes out. Jisung ignores him, not expecting Minho to cup his cheek.

His heart kicks up. Automatically, he raises his chin a little but Minho's already gently nudging him to look at him. His touch barely there, yet Jisung can't do anything but follow.

The air around them thickens, their food momentarily forgotten. Jisung's afraid to even swallow, to even breathe wrong to not break whatever's settled over them. He doesn't know if his mind is playing tricks on him again, but Minho's eyes look... half-lidded almost. He's tilting his head to the side and the sharpness of his features really comes out like this.

"Then," Minho sighs half aloud. His deep, deep eyes searching Jisung's face, looking for something. "What did you *want*?" And his tone makes it the most sinful word in history.

Is Jisung... is Jisung reading this wrong? What the fuck is happening? They were just laughing like idiots a few seconds ago, eating their dinner in silence a few minutes ago, and now the tension around them, between them, inside them could be cut with a knife. Now Jisung's eyes wander to Minho's lips, to the little mole on Minho's nose, taking it all in, finally quenching his desire to scrutinise every inch of the beautiful dancer to his heart's content, openly feasting on what's in front of him, and Minho... lets him.

Jisung doesn't think he's ever had this happen to him before, but he sure as hell has watched enough romantic dramas and read enough love stories, be it in books or manhwas, that he assumes he knows where this might be going. The friction of Minho's thigh brushing against his suddenly turns into a source of great heat, and when he breathes, Jisung thinks the air's got much warmer too.

He silently searches for words to say. Or at least he thinks he does that; all he knows is his mouth is opening and closing without anything verbal being formed. Minho's hold on his cheek turns firmer, his little finger stroking Jisung's heated skin.

Before he can realise what he's doing, Jisung tilts his head too, to the other side.

“Jisungie,” Minho exhales, like a prayer. Like he’s testing it on his tongue even though he’s already said it so many times.

“...Minho-hyung,” Jisung echoes back, it feels only appropriate. The contrast between Minho’s soft voice and his own more gravely one, sticky with something sweet, makes his head spin.

He sees Minho’s throat bob when he swallows, it looks like he’s not the only one with his throat clogged with molasses after all.

“...Just,” Minho whispers, the blush on his golden skin darkening.

And then, Jisung hears a pitchy *meow* reverberate through his bedroom.

His eyebrows shoot up his forehead and for a split second, he thinks that sound came out of Minho, and he also thinks he wouldn’t mind it one bit if he did but... Minho’s mouth has been almost closed this entire time, plus he’s looking back at Jisung with an equally startled expression.

Jisung watches the redness dissipate from Minho’s face, though the tips of his ears are still glowing in the warm light.

“Is,” Jisung tries to break the awkwardness, he doesn’t really know what he wants to ask, what’s expected of him in this situation. “Was that-“

“Sorry,” Minho coughs and thank God for that because Jisung might have let his big mouth take over and ask something extremely stupid and inappropriate like ‘Was that you’.

“That was my phone,” Minho explains, placing the skillet from his thighs back onto the bedside table. “Someone’s clearly missing me,” he says with a little strain when he gets up from the bed, assumingly to retrieve his phone from the sports bag.

Jisung just nods to show he understands and to ideally mask he’s just entertained the thought of Minho meowing when they were about to... about to what really? Maybe he shouldn’t think about that. Maybe he shouldn’t think at all.

With this resolve, Jisung dives back into eating the rest of his dinner, hoping to distract himself somehow; his heartbeat still quickened, breathing laboured.

Minho comes back to join him on the bed, and this is definitely a sentence Jisung shouldn't dwell on too much if he wants to seem at least a little bit sane in front of the older man.

His bowl finished, Jisung holds it in his lap because he doesn't have it in him to lean over Minho to place the bowl on his bedside table. When their thighs touch again, Jisung's heart jumps to his throat so intensely that he has to shuffle further to the right, away from Minho and any physical contact he could make with him, lest he suffocates with the overwhelming emotions.

Minho easily opens his lock screen, typing in a PIN code with his left hand, and Jisung stops to think if he's left-handed or right-handed, he's pretty sure he's seen him use both hands. Is Minho maybe... ambidextrous?

Before Jisung's brain can start supplying him with more improper thoughts, Minho's messages app loads up, and Jisung, though he's not proud of it, catches the last message Minho's apparently received just now.

9:27 PM Hyune

Hyung, text me the address of the bar you're at tonight. I wasn't joking.

Lead pours inside Jisung's stomach, his throat dry, the rapid beats of his heart come to a halt. With these two sentences, he remembers why he's in this situation in the first place, why Minho had to come over to his apartment, and he feels so incredibly stupid for ever forgetting.

His mind immediately flashes him images of Minho lying exhausted on the dance floor, it replays the argument Minho had with Hyunjin, reminds him of the very first time he saw Minho, at the bar, his forehead nearly touching the surface of the bar counter, looking defeated, then turning to Jisung with pure disdain in his eyes.

Jisung gets actually nauseous when he realises these images will immediately lead to the most horrible ones, the ones with Minho's body unmoving, with blood pouring from his abdomen.

Consequently, Jisung remembers what he heard Hyunjin scream this morning in front of the dance studio.

"-and then you go to drink again and you can't remember what you did at

night, and all of that over some stupid fucking choreo!”

Jisung looks at Minho. He’s blinking at his phone screen, his face doing the wannabe-neutral thing again. He doesn’t look sad or startled or offended, or anything, his features are just completely void of emotion, and Jisung doesn’t like that look on him. He thinks he would maybe even prefer the near-hatred Minho directed his way the first time at the bar.

Contrary to popular belief, Jisung’s not stupid. He can put two and two together and decipher the meaning of Hyunjin’s message. Probably. It clearly indicates Minho’s been spending almost every night at bars. Drinking. And – this haunts Jisung – doing things he can’t remember, as Hyunjin said. Most likely because he’s too drunk by that time.

Jisung remembers what he witnessed the first night; the guy slipping the pill in Minho’s drink.

Has this... happened to Minho before? Does it happen often? Is he always able to defend himself the same way he did back then?

And all of that over some stupid fucking choreo?

“Is it,” Jisung voices his thoughts. “Is it because of the choreography?”

Minho looks at him, quizzical. He probably doesn’t know Jisung can see his phone screen from this angle.

Jisung just nods in the general direction of Minho’s phone.

“What Hyunjin said,” he specifies. “Do you go to bars because of the choreography? Do you drink because of it?” Jisung catches on to the urgency in his voice. He’s a few seconds away from letting it all pour out, he can tell.

Minho nervously swallows, switching his screen off. He’s retreating back into himself, doesn’t want to share this piece of himself with Jisung. Jisung doesn’t know why. If it’s because Minho doesn’t trust him enough or because he’s embarrassed about it because he thinks it’s something unsightly. However, his silence is enough of an answer.

“Hyung,” Jisung breathes out, voice nearly breaking. “That’s horrible,” he laments, again cursing himself for complicating Minho’s life, for putting him in potential danger, for putting the empty expression on his face.

Because he's got his eyes glued to the turned-off screen of Minho's phone, he doesn't have a chance to notice the flash of hurt on the dancer's face.

"Did you," Jisung knows this, he doesn't know why he's asking about it, maybe he needs to hear the confirmation from Minho. Maybe that will drive home just how irreversibly he's hurt him. "Did you want to go to drink tonight too?" He fucking knows this. Yes, he did. He did because that's where you met him the night you didn't help him, the night you refused to help him, you stupid fucking coward.

Minho stays quiet.

How long has he been doing this? How long has it been since Jisung with Chan and Changbin submitted the track to their professor? How long has Minho been beating himself up over it? How long has he been spending his nights with a bottle of vodka in his hand, with unrecallable memories plaguing his head in the morning?

"Hyung-"

"Yes," Minho says, flat, not meeting Jisung's eyes. Jisung lets him talk. "You... you heard Hyunjin yell at me this morning, didn't you? It didn't really put me in the mood to," Minho searches for what to say next. "Not go tonight," he finishes vaguely.

"But," the dancer starts anew after a few seconds of silence. "Han Jisung-nim, you made me a track I can work with," the nickname that would either have Jisung blushing or smiling now makes tears well up in his eyes. He hates how casual Minho's trying to be about this whole thing, how he tries to joke about his pain, to lighten the mood with an easy laughter when Jisung can hear it's not genuine. "So it's okay tonight and it's gonna be okay tomorrow, I'm gonna be okay."

It's the most honest Minho's ever been with him, the most honest display of what's inside him that he's shown Jisung so far, and yet, it couldn't be a bigger lie. Because Jisung knows, he fucking knows it's not true. He fucking knows Minho's not going to be okay tomorrow and he knows it's his goddamn fault. The person who's hurt because of him, fucking hell, the person who *dies* because of him, who can't survive because of him, who has to claw at pavements and wooden floors in the last desperate attempt to save his life, that very person is trying to comfort Jisung over it. He's trying to comfort the cause of his destructive cycle, trying to comfort him over his own fucking pain. He's promising him a tomorrow, a better tomorrow, when Jisung

knows there will be no tomorrow, that everything they've built together is going to disappear when today repeats.

"No," Jisung shakes his head, voice airy. He's not quite sure who he's talking to, not quite sure why he's giving any voice to these thoughts in the first place, perhaps he just can't keep them to himself anymore, not with Minhø trying to give him a reassuring smile over his own death. "No, you're not... you're not gonna be okay," he confesses, all the ways he's watched Minhø die assaulting his unseeing eyes.

It comes as a surprise to Jisung when he feels a light touch against his cheek again, no doubt meaning to comfort, however, it only makes him flinch. He can't comprehend Minhø's actions, can't understand why he would touch him, why he would smile at him, why he would try to make him laugh, when all Jisung's done is ruin him.

Jisung searches for Minhø's face, finding a little smile of reconciliation on his lips, his eyes filled with more sparkles than usual, only they seem to... wobble a bit as if concealed below a thin water surface.

"Hyunjin's looking for me," Minhø says, his hand, the one he touched Jisung's cheek with, still kind of hovers but it's like Minhø's keeping it to himself, like he's reluctant to reach out. "I'd better not make him mad two times in one day. Think I'd better go," Minhø says with soft finality that pierces Jisung's chest through and through.

He can only watch as the man leaves. When the bar's door shuts behind him with an unnecessarily loud slam, that's when Jisung's consciousness gets pulled back into reality.

He blames it on the ringing in his ears when something resembling a "...lp me!" pierces through the slowly waking-up Seoul.

Jisung whips his head around, ignoring Chan's fussing at his hide. Everything around him pales, fades in the background except for the vibrant orange mop of hair retreating further away from him.

"...lp me," the lump quietly sobs. It's like there is barely anything left inside it except for the red it's overflowing with.

"Then, see you tomorrow!" Minhø announces, taking a little bow.

"Yeah... see you," intentionally leaving the 'tomorrow' part out, Jisung watches Minhø's vibrant orange mop of hair, watches him slowly move away, becoming smaller and smaller, and gradually disappear, taking all the remnants of warmth with him.

Minho's head is lying motionless as if it's no longer attached to his body. Gasping for breath, he looks up. His beautiful brown eyes are turning dark again, he doesn't want to let them, doesn't want them to close, fights against eyelids falling shut.

"Ji...sung...ie, help me."

He can't let him leave. He can *not* let Minho leave.

When Jisung blinks himself back into reality, trembles rocking through his body coming from his deepest core, Minho's no longer on the bed with him. The purest form of dread seizes his entire throat and lungs when he realises Minho's not in the room anymore. Has he already left?

Jisung scrambles to his feet, nearly falling on his face. He's propelled forward by the sheer need to make Minho stay. He doesn't know if it's going to help, he doubts it will, but he knows he can't let Minho slip through his fingers. Not again. Not for the fourth time. Each time Minho left, he was forced to watch him die, Jisung's going to stay awake with toothpicks keeping his eyes open if only to make sure Minho's there the entire night, he's going to fight this time inconsistency, this fucking loop with everything he fucking has.

He sees him at the entrance door, his sports bag already over his shoulder, his puffer jacket on.

Jisung doesn't know the state he's in, but he must either be breathing too loud, or he must have knocked something over because Minho's head immediately whips in his direction.

Jisung crosses the distance between them, doesn't notice how Minho takes a tentative step away from him. He feels insane enough he's ready to... to maybe force Minho to stay here against his will, he doesn't know what he'd be capable of doing right now to make sure Minho doesn't leave.

He physically needs to hold him in his proximity, so he reaches a hand to Minho, wrapping it tightly around his wrist, as tight as he can, afraid Minho could break free.

Minho blinks at him, the startled bunny look back on his face. "... Hannie?" He questions, a new nickname Jisung hasn't heard yet, and it makes him ache.

He wonders what other nicknames Minho could come up with for

him, what other nicknames he could come up with for Minho. Wonders how else they could spend their day together. No, fuck that. Wonders how else they could spend their *days* together. Wonders why Minho's still so gentle with him when Jisung must seem like an asylum patient. Wonders how far Minho's kindness extends and knows it's endless. He wonders about all the possibilities for them that will never come true because Jisung's got them both trapped in this vicious cycle.

And something inside him just snaps, like a fucking plane crashing.

"Your name's Lee Minho and you think there's too many Lee Minhos and Yangs in Korea, you are 25 years old, you are a dancer major at the university, you have competed in martial arts competitions since you were young and not only in Korea but in Japan too. You used to do martial arts, taekwondo and hapkido and you can beat up a guy head taller than you. You love pudding but you prefer the Japanese one. You live to the left of the university. You have a muffler with kitten paws. You think my cheeks make me look like a squirrel and you think I should be the founder of squirrelogist major. And you've never met a Han Jisung before. You wanted to go to the bar tonight and order a bottle of vodka and," Jisung absentmindedly realises he's running out of things he could say, realising he maybe doesn't know Minho much after all, but as water pools in his eyes, his mouth rambles on.

"And you have three cats, and you can cook well, and your ears get red when you lie or when you get shy and you roll your eyes up when you're thinking and," Jisung's begun to cry at this point, he hides his mouth with his hand, not wanting to give any voice to the worst and most inevitable truth. He's getting lost in what he wants to say, what he's even trying to convey. "And you asked me for help, and I didn't, oh god, I didn't help you, I didn't- I watched you- I saw you- I've let you leave, so many times, I didn't-"

Minho tries to steady him, putting his hands on Jisung's shoulders. Jisung hears someone's desperate gasps for breaths, someone hyperventilating, only distantly understanding the sounds are being squeezed out of his own throat.

"Jisungie," he hears Minho's voice full of concern.

Frantic, Jisung tries to blink the tears away but there's so many they just keep spilling over.

His hand comes into contact with something firm and soft at the same time, something rising up and down, a soft *thud, thud* under his palm. He looks up, what he's seeing still blurred with water, but he clearly sees his own hand against Minho's chest, Minho's fingers carefully caressing Jisung's wrist.

His inhales and exhales are exaggeratedly deep and Jisung's body starts falling in sync with them unconsciously. The fog in his head slowly clearing, the ringing in his ears quietening, his eyes seeing again.

For some time, he's just looking at Minho while Minho's looking at him, letting Jisung adjust to reality. He goes to let go of his hand around Jisung's wrist, but Jisung catches it instead, faintly intertwining their fingers.

"Hannie," Minho exhales, "What did you see?" he asks.

And Jisung can't deny it anymore, not with Minho looking at him so openly, so sincerely waiting for his answer. Communicating to him that he's not going to judge him, that he's just going to accept whatever it is Jisung says.

With a single fragile breath, everything he's been keeping only to himself, the truth that's been terrorizing him, floats in the space between them.

"I saw you die. Three times."

Chapter End Notes

TWs:

Getting sick, not graphic:

Stop reading at: "Jisung barely crashes to his knees", start reading again at: "He feels like a mere shell of the Jisung he was when he woke up in the previous loop".

Very mild (aftermath of) violence:

Stop reading at: "taking all the remnants of warmth with him", start reading again at: "'Ji...sung...ie, help me".

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

Be sure to check notes at the end for any TWs. Stay safe! ♡

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)



“So that’s why you knew what my name was in the café this morning. Why you said I needed your help.”

“That’s right, yeah....”

“I see...”

They are back on Jisung’s bed, sitting at the edge of it like it’s a makeshift couch. Jisung has managed to somewhat calm down, or rather Minho calmed him down, now he just occasionally dabs his eyes with a tissue the dancer provided from his sports bag.

Minho’s a little spaced out but that shouldn’t be surprising, considering he’s just learned about the fact that he’s already died multiple times, or some parallel versions of him anyway. He doesn’t question Jisung’s sanity, he doesn’t freak out, doesn’t try to convince him it’s all in his head or that he dreamed it up, it’s almost like he already had a suspicion Jisung didn’t meet him for the first time today.

Jisung’s told him everything. That they met at the bar, how Jisung didn’t help him back then, and how he didn’t help him when Minho came running asking him for help. He tells him how they bumped into each other at the café, how he ran up to him and begged him to not go to the bar, how they parted ways three times, how he saw Minho die at his apartment when he didn’t go to the bar.

He notices Minho subconsciously placing his hand against his abdomen when Jisung describes, in as minimum detail as possible, the ways he saw him die. He wishes he could place his own hand on top of Minho’s, reassure him at least in some way because, god fucking damn it, after all this time Minho’s still the one reassuring him. Reassuring him that he’s not crazy, that he believes him.

“And,” Minho starts, careful, reluctant. “Do you think you know why

you're looping? Do you have any... working theory?"

"I," Jisung's voice trembles. He coughs, tries to regain some control. "I think it's because I... because I didn't help you," he says quietly.

He's pretty sure that's the case, he realised as much the second time he looped. The reason is not really the problem, the problem is he has no fucking idea how to break the cycle, and screw the cycle honestly, the most pressing issue is that he has no fucking idea how to stop Minho from dying.

"I'm sorry," Jisung sobs, pressing the heels of his hand against his eyes, fucking watering again. "I'm sorry I don't... I don't know what to do."

Minho places his hand on Jisung's shoulder, and it fucking burns through him. The last thing he deserves.

"Jisung-ah," Minho tries, soothing. "There's no need to apologise, it's just-"

Jisung's entire arm jerks back so intensely he nearly dislocates his shoulder.

"Yes, there is!" He shouts back, throat bubbling with tears. He can no longer listen to Minho trying to comfort him, it's ridiculous when he is the reason he's dying, hurting. "If I wasn't a fucking coward and helped you the first time, you wouldn't be in this situation! You're going to die again tonight and it will be my fault and I don't fucking know what to do about it! What's there not to apologise for? You're suffering because of me, do you not get it?!"

So much for calming down, by the end of his monologue Jisung's hysterically sobbing again, pressing the back of his hand against his mouth to quieten himself down. Unsuccessfully.

"I... do," Minho says carefully, he's retreated his hand back. "Yeah, I guess it sucks to die, I don't know, I don't really remember it, but you..." he looks at Jisung. "Do you not realise that you're suffering, too? Jisungie, I can't even imagine watching someone die, and you saw it three fucking times. You're allowed to feel scared. You're allowed to not know what to do, to need time to process it."

Every new word out of Minho's mouth breaks Jisung down more and more. Is it... is it selfish if these are the words he needs to hear the most? Is it selfish if he latches onto Minho's disgustingly

compassionate and kind heart when he's the reason it stops beating every night? He doesn't need to ask these questions, it is incredibly selfish, and it makes him voice his selfish wish out loud.

"Hyung, I don't... I don't want you to die," he says, voice breaking.

Glistening eyes look back at him. "I don't want to die either," the dancer confesses. "But I don't think that I will tonight, I feel," Minho plays with his small fingers. "I feel safe right now. With you," his ears redden.

Jisung wants to reach out, wants to touch Minho, offer him at least a smidgen of the kindness the dancer has offered him. But there's something holding him back. Something telling him he's not deserving of it, something telling he he's going to taint Minho if he so much as tries to touch him in reassurance. It's not his place to do so, because he can't reassure him about anything other than you will surely die because of me at the end of this day.

"I want to keep you safe," Jisung settles on, kneading his hands in his lap. He feels like with Minho it's okay to express his wishes even though he has no way of fulfilling them. "I want you to... to stay here, tonight," he admits in a clipped voice. "I don't want you to leave, hyung. I don't want to watch you leave, please..."

"I won't," Minho breathes out.

"I don't know if it will work," Jisung snuffles, wiping away the tears on his face. "I'm sorry, I really don't know."

"That's okay," Minho says, the phrase like a warm blanket on his lips. "We won't know until we try. If it doesn't work, we can try again tomorrow. ...Tomorrow? Today? Fuck, it really is confusing."

Jisung chuckles a bit at that, Minho's most likely done it on purpose, to ease out the incredibly heavy atmosphere, but Jisung's just... grateful.

"We can try again tomorrow," he echoes, possibly the only feeble attempt at reassurance he can offer.

They fall silent. And maybe for the first time between them, it doesn't feel natural but Jisung's too afraid to break the quiet. Maybe Minho doesn't want to talk to him anymore, maybe he needs time to work through everything he's learned so far. Jisung doesn't want to disturb him.

“You look exhausted,” Minho says after a while. He’s looking at Jisung’s face, where Jisung can feel his eye bags weighing down. “You should rest, Jisungie. I can go to the other room.”

“No!” the word is out of Jisung’s mouth before the meaning of what Minho’s just said can properly register in his brain. He thinks it’s a visceral reaction to the ‘I can go’ part, because that’s the last thing he wants Minho to do.

Minho’s already gotten up from the bed. Jisung catches the dancer’s wrist, momentarily forgetting his resolve about not touching him.

“Please stay here, hyung. Right here with me,” Jisung begs, nodding his head towards his bed.

He wants to say that he doesn’t want to sleep in the first place, but he quickly reconsiders seeing the conflicted expression Minho’s wearing. He’s probably feeling guilty, and it wouldn’t help if Jisung openly said he plans to lose sleep over him.

“I wouldn’t want to make you uncomfortable,” Minho says, uncharacteristically quietly.

Jisung’s dumbfounded. “What do you mean? I won’t be-“

“Jisung,” Minho interrupts him resolutely. It doesn’t escape Jisung’s attention that he didn’t use any of the nicknames he came up with.

He’s holding eye contact with Jisung, but it looks like it’s causing him pain.

“If I know this is the last night I can be with you... I don’t think it’s a good idea for us to share a bed,” Minho admits, red dusting his cheeks.

Jisung mouth falls open while he tries to make sense of the situation. Minho’s words repeat in his head over and over again, and he’s trying to overlap them with how Minho looks; his eyes sparkly, gaze averted, the blush from his ears and cheeks spreading down his neck.

“Oh,” Jisung exhales when the reality sinks in if he didn’t misinterpret it at least. He’s at a loss for words, though if he could make his tongue work, he would say so many.

Minho chuckles humourlessly, self-deprecating. “Yeah, *oh*” Jisung can feel Minho trying to tug away his wrist from his hold. It sparks panic

in him. "So I think I should go,"

"I won't be uncomfortable, hyung," Jisung urges, tightening his fingers around the dancer's wrist. Maybe some of the implications are still escaping him, but he knows he can't let Minhø go. Not even to the room right next to his. He doesn't want any distance to separate them. "I won't."

"Jisung-ah, I swear I won't leave the apartment," Minhø bargains, still lightly attempting to break free. "You don't have to force yourself to..."

"I'm not forcing myself," Jisung defends because the idea alone is ridiculous. If only Minhø knew what sort of thoughts Jisung has had about him this day alone.

He steps closer to Minhø, this close to reaching out a hand to cup his cheeks and make him look at him. "What are you talking about, hyung?"

Conflict dances in Minhø's eyes before he shuts his eyelids tightly.

"I know you said the drinking is horrible," Minhø begins to confess. "And that you didn't like me touching you, and... and you're in such vulnerable headspace and I don't fucking want to take advantage of that, Jisung."

Jisung's desperately trying to catch up with whatever Minhø's saying. He didn't like him touching him? Where did Minhø get that idea from?

"Please, let me go," Minhø requests, the plea so sincere Jisung needs to convince him otherwise immediately.

He does let go of Minhø's wrist but only to bring both of his hands to his face, cupping it the way he's pictured so many times.

Minhø's eyes flutter open. Jisung would like to think he sees stars in them, but he knows it's something much less joyous.

"Hyu- Minhø," Minhø trembles under his hands. "I can't think of a better way to spend this night than with you," Jisung surprises himself with the steadiness of his voice. It might be because there's nothing he's ever been more certain about.

Jisung sees Minhø open his mouth, probably to contradict him, and he

doesn't think about anything else than the need to prove him wrong to prove that he's telling nothing but the truth when he rises on his tiptoes and brings their lips together.

There are no fireworks bursting behind his eyelids, the way they always did at the pages of the romantic manhwas he's read. There's silence enveloping them interrupted only by the shuddery breath Minho takes against his mouth. His lips are soft but there are ridges on them here and there as if Minho's been biting them. Jisung hopes it's soothing when he touches the little wounds with the inside of his lips, hopes it helps them heal.

Truth be told, he's not entirely sure what he's doing because his experience in this area is limited. He hoped the natural instinct would kick in and tell him exactly what to do, but he's afraid he's going to mess something up, afraid he might break Minho, shatter the pieces he's bared to Jisung.

He disconnects the barely there kiss, standing back on his feet. His head feels floaty.

Minho's face is still so close to his, his perfectly sharp nose nearly brushing against Jisung's cheek, his gaze intense in Jisung's eyes. He looks frozen in time. How ironic.

Jisung swallows. His fingers reluctantly caress Minho's cheeks. He wants to say something, though he doesn't know what, but the dancer beats him to it.

"Kick me if it's too much," Minho gasps, desperation colouring his words, and then he's kissing Jisung, licking into his mouth.

Jisung whimpers in his throat when he feels Minho's arm easily snake around his waist, his fingers settling on his lower back. He arches into the touch, fingers slipping from the dancer's face to grasp at his shoulders.

He stumbles over his feet, too preoccupied with trying to match the intensity of Minho's kiss, forcing his knees to not buckle under the caress of Minho's plush tongue against his palette. Only for a split second, he realises he's falling before his back hits the mattress with a soft thud.

"It's okay, Hannie, I got you," Minho quickly breathes out, stroking the back of his head. He must have moved his hand there to cushion Jisung's fall.

Dumbly, Jisung nods, intertwining his fingers behind Minho's neck. "I don't know what I'm doing," he whispers.

Minho gives him a small smile. He strokes his finger under Jisung's ear, sending shivers through his body.

"You don't have to do anything," he answers the question Jisung didn't ask. "Have we... Have we done this before?" Minho asks, the blush on his cheeks darkening.

"N-No," Jisung shakes his head. "No, we've never... I-I have never..."

Something glitters in Minho's eyes. As if overwhelmed by Jisung's response, he wraps both his arms around his middle, embracing him as tight as he can without hurting him. His forehead drops to Jisung's shoulder.

"H-Hyung?" Jisung stutters, a little taken aback. He twists his head to the side to see Minho's face but it's perfectly hidden.

Then he tilts his head and Jisung comes face to face with his pink cheeks, his eyes crinkled, the smile stretching his lips so sweet it must be oozing honey. Jisung wants to lick it off.

"I'm glad it's me, Jisungie," Minho admits, only for Jisung's ears to hear. He presses a quick peck on Jisung's cheek.

Jisung blinks at Minho's ethereal beauty, can't believe he gets to witness him like this. Soft and warm with affection etched on his face. Affection for Jisung.

"H-Have you?" Jisung asks shyly.

Minho tilts his head in question.

"...Done this before," Jisung clarifies, though he's pretty sure he knows the answer. Minho's 25 for God's sake, almost everyone's already done this by the time they are twenty, it's just Jisung who's at least three years behind.

Minho hums in affirmation, shy about it. Jisung thinks it's endearing, wants to bottle up his reaction.

Jisung thinks about the people Minho is surrounded by. Wonders if he goes to the bars to look for someone to sleep with, wonders if he's the type to hook up or if he's been in a serious relationship before, and if

he has then how many. He wonders about his dancer friends, wonders about all the things he doesn't know about Minhø yet, about how much more there is to discover.

"With... Hyunjin?" Jisung chances, thinking back to the interaction he witnessed between the two beautiful dancers. He feels something tighten in his belly at the idea of Minhø and Hyunjin together. Or Minhø and the petite blond boy with freckles whose name has already escaped his memory.

Minhø's eyes widen before he scrunches his nose with a little chuckle. "No," he dismisses, amused. "Hyunjin's got the hots for that jacked guy from music major, kinda short too."

Now it's time for Jisung's eyes to widen and stare back at Minhø. Hyunjin the out-of-this-world gorgeous slim tall fucking top model is into Changbin? Or, wait, maybe Chan?? It could be either of them based on that description.

"Can we maybe not talk about Hyunjin right now?" Minhø whines, tearing Jisung away from his thoughts. "Unless it gets you in the mood, which, understandable, I guess I could work with that."

Jisung's laugh bursts out of him before he can stop it.

"Yeah, you really look like it," he can't help but tease at the miserable expression on Minhø's face.

"I could try for you," Minhø defends himself, stubborn.

Jisung utilises the fact his hands are still connected behind Minhø's neck to bring their faces closer. He goes willingly.

"You get me in the mood," Jisung says against Minhø's lips.

He doesn't know if Minhø giggling is the desired effect, but he finds he definitely doesn't mind it.

"That was cheesy as fuck," Minhø laughs.

Jisung feels blood pool in his cheeks.

"Okay mister 'I'm glad it's me, Jisungie'," he mocks.

"Hey!" Minhø slaps Jisung's shoulder without any strength behind it. Their faces must be equally red at this point. "I am..." he murmurs, embarrassed.

“And you *do* get me in the mood,” Jisung stands by his cheesy point. Emboldened by Minhø curling against his shoulder, he brings his mouth to the dancer’s glowing ear. “So maybe... do something about it,” he presses his lips against Minhø’s earlobe, immediately awarded with a little bitten-back sound.

“Or... should I do something about it instead?” Jisung teases, seeing Minhø so small on top of him is doing something to both his brain and his heart.

That seems to wake Minhø up. “Don’t say I didn’t warn you,” he threatens, though Jisung can barely make the words out when they’re muffled against his hoodie.

He doesn’t get the chance to respond because Minhø’s lips press against his neck and all his thoughts liquify.

“Fuck, h-hyung,” he curses, moving his hand to Minhø’s head, running his fingers through his soft hair to hold him against the juncture between his neck and shoulder. Jisung’s legs scramble for purchase at the flat mattress.

Most of Jisung’s skin is still hidden under the yellow hoodie he has on, so Minhø harshly tugs at his collar, trying to bare as much of Jisung’s neck as possible. Jisung helps him by turning his head to the side for better access.

He tries to bite down all the pathetic sounds that want to escape from his throat. It only gets more difficult when Minhø starts nibbling on his neck, all teeth and tongue, no doubt leaving behind bitemarks and hickeys, Jisung wishes he could watch them darken over the following days.

“I want them... to be visible,” Jisung gulps between words, his voice thinning out by the end. He pulls on Minhø’s hair.

“Fuck, Hannie,” Minhø swears, his hot breath brushing Jisung’s skin, sending goosebumps down his spine. “Yeah, yeah, I’ll make them visible,” he promises.

The sound of Minhø sucking against his neck so intensely it borders on painful is music to Jisung’s ears. He’s gasping for breath, but it feels like his lungs could never expand enough while his skin bruises under Minhø’s mouth.

Minhø’s hands begin to travel across Jisung’s body, one of them

settling at the side of his thigh. Minho's hands are small, but his arms are strong, and he easily lifts Jisung's leg off the mattress.

Jisung's crotch brushes against Minho's, and he would be embarrassed by the fact he's already rock hard if he didn't feel Minho's hard-on through his cargo pants.

There's a part of him that wants to wrap his legs around Minho's hips, rub their clothed dicks together until they both cum. But he doesn't want this to be over so soon.

Minho raises his head from where it's been buried in Jisung's neck. His lips look swollen, redder than Jisung's ever seen them, glistening with spit. Entranced, Jisung brings his hand to Minho's mouth, mapping out his pouty bottom lip with his fingertips, satisfied when he finds the ridges there are not as profound as they were before.

He wants to smile at Minho but the way Minho's looking at him disarms him completely. It's like his pupils have melted, become one with the dark brown of his irises. He's staring at Jisung, unblinking, through his thick eyelashes.

The very tip of his tongue gently, experimentally licks against Jisung's finger. Jisung hopes he understands the message Minho's eyes are trying to communicate, and he slips two of his fingers past Minho's lips, inside the warmth of his mouth.

He feels the violent shudder that runs through the dancer's entire body, feels his thighs flex where he's half-straddling Jisung. His eyes slip shut, his tongue letting Jisung's fingers just rest there, before it forces the gap between them wider, twirls around them.

Minho starts sucking on Jisung's finger so thoroughly he might as well have his cock in his mouth instead. Jisung has to knock his knees together, so he doesn't violently combust at the visual alone.

Minho tilts his head to draw his tongue down the side of Jisung's pointer finger, pressing kisses all over, his eyes flutter open to look at him, and that's the last straw for Jisung.

He tears his fingers away, leaving Minho blinking in puzzlement with seemingly zero thoughts in his head. He takes advantage of the dancer's weakened state, of his thighs shaking where he's holding himself up, and flips them over.

Seeing Minho under him, gazing up at him like he doesn't know what

his own name is, fills Jisung with a hardly describable power rush.

“J-Jisungie?” Minho asks, confused, his arms lying defenceless.

“I think you’ve done enough, hyung,” Jisung explains, his voice tinged with urgency. “My turn,” he says, reaching for the hem of his hoodie to strip it off, the air around them surely reaching a melting point by now.

Jisung throws his hoodie somewhere on the floor. Minho stares at him with his mouth open. There’s saliva pooling in the corner of his mouth.

“O-Oh,” the dancer breathes out, awestruck. He brings one hand to Jisung’s bicep, the muscle there solid from his involuntary gym visits.

Jisung’s hands sneak to the hem of Minho’s black t-shirt. He desperately wants to see, wants to shower Minho’s chest and stomach with kisses, wants to touch him more, wants to be closer to him.

“Hyung, can I?”

Minho’s fingers are still inspecting Jisung’s arm and shoulder. Jisung tries to not pay too much attention to Minho’s fascination with his arms, worried he could cum just from that. Jisung thought Minho would be more... proactive based on the fervour he kissed him with, but his heart swells with the older man being docile like this.

“Yeah,” Minho gives him the affirmative he needs. Jisung doesn’t waste any time.

His vibrant orange hair flops back down when Jisung pulls the t-shirt over his head. His body is incredible. It’s clear from his chest that his body is in excellent shape but his stomach, just as Jisung caught a glimpse of earlier, is soft. And neither Minho’s chest nor his belly are safe from the blush starting at his ears.

“Hyung, you’re so... you’re so red,” Jisung voices out loud before he can think about it. His hands follow his words, lightly mapping out the colour seeping through Minho’s golden complexion.

“Can’t help it,” Minho mumbles, throwing his arm over his eyes in embarrassment.

As if pulled in, Jisung brings his face closer to Minho’s chest, to his hardening nipples. He wants to know whether or not the colour will

darken if he blows air on it or if he kisses it, if he touches it.

“So pretty,” he whispers, pressing one kiss to Minhø’s sternum. The skin under his lips burns. He can feel the rapid beating of Minhø’s heart.

Jisung cups Minhø’s chest, he listens to his instinct, follows what he normally does to himself to feel good, and runs his finger over Minhø’s dusty-brown nipple.

Minhø’s back arches, searching for Jisung’s touch.

“H-Han-ah, not there,” he requests weakly, his words betraying what his body’s telling Jisung.

Jisung repeats the same motion, using his nail this time. He feels Minhø’s cock twitch against his ass.

He takes in a shuddery breath, properly straddling Minhø, sitting his crack right along the hard line of his cock.

It feels... big. It’s a new feeling for Jisung. His abdomen clenches, pre-cum pearling at the tip of his painfully hard cock, almost soaking through his jeans.

Minhø’s arms still lie unmoving. Jisung reaches for them, loosely wrapping his fingers around his wrists to bring them to his small waist.

Minhø’s looking at him with an expression so open it’s almost devastating. He carefully squeezes Jisung’s middle, waiting for further instruction.

Jisung rocks his hips back and forth, Minhø’s cock nestling between his ass cheeks. His legs shake. Minhø answers with a shuddery breath, throwing his head back.

“H-Hyung,” Jisung whines. “I don’t- I don’t know what I’m doing,” he confesses for the second time.

“You’re doing great, Hannie,” Minhø says back, his voice straining against arousal.

Jisung places his palms on Minhø’s broad chest for balance.

“Does it... Does hyung feel good?” He asks, almost out of breath. He rubs Minhø’s nipples with his little fingers.

He thinks Minho tries to answer with words, but in the end, he just whines high in his throat, pressing his lips stubbornly together and nodding his head.

Jisung leans over him, pushing his ass closer against his big cock. He licks at Minho's chest, enveloping the hardened nub with his mouth.

Minho's hips kick up. Jisung imagines how far Minho's cock could pierce his insides if they did this without clothes. It makes him sway his hips faster.

"Hannie," Minho's voice breaks against Jisung's nape, his breathing uncoordinated. "I'm gonna... Hyung's gonna... fuck,"

Jisung's chest swells with pride, a satisfied gasp falling from his mouth. "C-Cum, hyung," Jisung nearly sobs, his body's already getting tired, he can feel the burning in his thighs, in his groin, his legs straining to hold him up.

"Fuck, fuck, shit," Minho curses, sounding close to tears himself.

The hold he has on Jisung's waist tightens. Minho easily lifts Jisung's entire upper body off of his lap only to bring him back down just when he thrusts up, groaning in Jisung's ear. The tip of his cock lies close to Jisung's opening when he listens to his command and starts cumming, the warm liquid seeping through his cargo pants.

It elicits nearly inhuman sounds in Jisung. He thinks he draws blood with how hard he's biting at his lip, how hard he's trying to hold back and not follow Minho right over the edge.

Minho breathes through his release, his forehead buried in Jisung's hair. Jisung can feel him tremble. He strokes his shoulders, helping him come down from the high. Jisung tries to hide the hitches in his breath when his hole clenches around nothing but the fabric of his trousers.

He lifts his head to look at Minho, only now realising he's missed his expression when he orgasmed, missed how the tipping point of too much bliss looks on his face.

He makes a mental promise to change that by the end of the night.

"Are you okay?" Jisung asks, it feels like something he should ask.

"Yeah," Minho exhales, his eyes open to look back at Jisung,

sprinkling. “Sorry. Usually, I don’t... I’m not so quick,” Minho laughs humourlessly, humiliated. If anything, Jisung’s flattered.

He draws circles in the dip of Minho’s collarbones with his finger.

“Don’t worry, I have nothing to compare with,” Jisung presses a peck against Minho’s mouth.

And another one. By the third, he asks for access with his tongue and Minho’s lips obediently part, his arms circling Jisung’s waist again. Jisung tangles his fingers in Minho’s hair, tugs to position him where he wants him, deepening the kiss, mimicking what Minho did to his mouth before.

Minho’s thighs rub together and when Jisung feels his softening cock, he realises Minho must feel uncomfortable with his release sticky in his underwear.

He stops kissing him, shuffling on his knees further down Minho’s legs.

“Can I take this off?” Jisung asks, his fingers dancing along the hem of Minho’s pants. He feels the saliva in his mouth thicken at the mere thought of seeing Minho’s cock bare. He knows it’s big because he felt it, but he wonders if it’s veiny, if it curves like his does.

Minho smiles at Jisung, “You don’t have to ask.”

Jisung undoes the button and pulls down the zipper, the sound along with the anticipation thrumming in his veins makes his hands shake.

He pulls the fabric down, seeing the wet patch on Minho’s boxers, then his impossibly thick, muscular thighs, Jisung actually has to tug on Minho’s cargo pants quite harshly to make them slide down, he wonders if Minho has a hard time dressing up when he has to pull whatever bottoms over the solid muscles, can’t help but picture him in tight leather pants.

Minho brings his knees closer to his chest to wiggle out of the rest of his trousers. Jisung can’t do anything but stare in awe at the beauty of Minho’s legs, strong with defined muscles everywhere. Jisung supposes this is what dancing from childhood does to a person.

Minho’s toe touches near Jisung’s crotch.

“You too,” he says. “And the t-shirt too,” Minho raises his brows at the

offending material still covering Jisung's chest.

Jisung pulls his t-shirt off, shuddering against the cold air in his bedroom. He quickly pushes his hair back with one hand, moves it to the hemline of his trousers when Minhø stops him.

The springs in his bed creak when the dancer sits up on his knees.

"I want to do it," Minhø says, he looks at Jisung through his eyelashes, his mouth puckered up in a little pout.

Jisung supports his weight on his hands on the mattress, giving Minhø free access. "O-Okay," he whispers.

Minhø tugs on Jisung's trousers, Jisung raises his hips up to help him along. He feels Minhø's fingers catch onto his boxers as well.

Minhø raises one eyebrow in a silent question. Jisung, nervous, nods.

His cock springs free, it's so hard it slaps against his belly. For a moment, Minhø stops and just stares until Jisung shyly clears his throat to remind him he's left with his trousers half-on.

Once they are finally off, Minhø runs his hands over Jisung's slim thighs to his groin. He leans down, practically perched on all fours in Jisung's bed, his face almost brushing against his cock.

"I want to suck you off, Jisungie," Minhø nuzzles his cheek to Jisung's tip, the oozing pre-cum immediately tainting the reddened skin. It's almost enough to make Jisung's heart stop.

Jisung swallows with difficulty. He's afraid he's going to combust the very second Minhø puts his mouth on him. Hell, he's afraid he might cum just from Minhø looking at him like this, talking to him like this.

He curls his fingers in the sheets.

Minhø's lip catches on Jisung's tip.

"I like having my mouth full," the dancer reminds him. His blissed-out face when he took Jisung's fingers inside his mouth flashes through Jisung's mind, leaving him paralysed.

Minhø's eyes glaze over. "Come on," he nudges Jisung with his sharp nose, his mouth still in direct contact with his leaking tip. "Feed me your cock, Hannie."

Jisung's resulting moan is pathetic to his own ears but what else is he supposed to do with Minhو like that? Minhو is surrendering all control to Jisung's hands, waiting for Jisung to regain it, to take the reins. It is admittedly difficult when he worries he could paint Minhو's face white if he so much as tried to move.

Jisung reluctantly wraps his hand around his girth, guiding his cock to Minhو's parted lips. Minhو kitten licks at the length immediately.

Jisung throws his head back with a cry when his tip disappears in Minhو's warmth. He feels his tongue, the inside of his mouth coated in spit. Jisung's thighs twitch but Minhو's small hands press them back down into the mattress.

Minhو's tongue circles his tip, lapping at the pre-cum there, and then he starts bopping his head up and down Jisung's dick, the same way he did with his fingers not too long ago.

His eyes are shut, focusing on the task at hand. Jisung can't keep his own eyes open for the life of him, not when Minhو takes him deeper down his throat, almost choking. He thinks he sees a single tear run down Minhو's cheek.

"M-Minhو," Jisung moans, the honorific completely forgotten.

He brings his hand to the top of Minhو's head, not to pull at his hair, just resting it there in silent reassurance.

"It feels so fucking good, baby," Jisung's brain-to-mouth filter stops functioning, assuming his brain's even working in the first place. He doesn't think, he just feels and blurts out what he's feeling.

Minhو shakes under his hand, his thighs clenching together. He whimpers around Jisung's dick and Jisung can feel the vibrations.

Jisung's body can't quite decide between looking at Minhو and letting all the filth and praise pour out of lips, or closing his eyes, biting his lip, and jerking his head this way and that way to process the absolute ecstasy holding him hostage.

When he does look at Minhو, there's a string of saliva dribbling from the corner of his mouth.

Jisung's hips kick up, his cockhead bumping against the back of Minhو's throat.

“Oh fuck, sorry, sorry,” Jisung quickly rushes through an apology, bringing his hips back down.

Minho’s eyes are open now, glued with tears, probably from the shock of Jisung shoving his cock down his throat. He’s stopped moving his head too, just blinking his big dark eyes at Jisung.

Jisung wants to ease him off his cock, tell him he can stop, he’s forcing his throat to form these words, but Minho brings his shaky hand to Jisung’s, the one he has in Minho’s hair, and covers it.

Jisung’s mind is too foggy to understand what Minho means, so the dancer applies enough pressure; Jisung’s hand forced to push his head further down his cock.

Minho looks at him through his lashes clumped with tears. He could let go of Jisung’s cock, could just tell him what he wants him to do, but he really seems almost... fixated on having his mouth not be empty.

Jisung swallows, his fingers tangling in Minho’s hair, the flutter of Minho’s lashes is enough to let him know he’s read the message in his eyes correctly.

“I don’t... want to hurt you,” he exhales, words clouded with desire.

Minho just shakes his head as much as he can in his position.

He pulls on Minho’s strands, the dancer’s eyes automatically falling shut. There’s no resistance against Jisung’s hold, he can move Minho’s head over his cock however he sees fit. It sets his insides on fire.

Minho’s lips slide up and down his cock however Jisung dictates, the slobbering sounds sinful. Soon enough, his entire shaft is coated with spit, making the slide easier, and also easier to accidentally bring Minho too close to his base, to choke him.

Minho’s small fingers crawl at Jisung’s thighs, scrambling for purchase. His hips unconsciously roll against the air, Jisung can see him clenching his toes, kicking his feet, his back is red. Minho’s so responsive it’s driving Jisung mad. And he’s the one doing all of this to Minho’s body. To Minho’s incredibly strong body that seems every bit unmovable.

Jisung feels the ever-familiar tension in his belly tighten.

Fuck, he doesn't want to cum yet. He doesn't want to cum until Minho's at least equally undone as he feels.

He drags him off of his cock. Minho squints at him, betrayed. It's adorable really.

"H...Ha...nnie?" Minho inquires, his voice fucking *ruined*; scratchy, barely there.

He lightly wraps his hand around Jisung's cock, either guessing Jisung'd rather Minho finish him off with a hand job or scared to lose the proximity of Jisung's dick. Both possibilities make Jisung groan low in his throat.

He slaps Minho's hand away.

"You- You have to stop this," he tells him, gasping for breath.

"Why," Minho asks, his worries flashing through his face. "Do you... not like it?"

Jisung cradles the dancer's face with his hands, bringing him closer and looking directly into his eyes. If only to take Minho's attention off his dick.

"I like it *too* much," Jisung cites the evident truth. Minho's eyes brighten. "And I don't want to cum yet, I want to... together," it's probably silly but Jisung's rationality's long gone at this point, he still has the decency to at least blush at the request.

Minho's quiet. He shuffles on his knees, straightens his back. He mimics Jisung, cupping his full cheeks with his hands, silently asking for eye contact – Jisung wasn't even aware he'd stopped looking at Minho at some point.

He does look back at him. Can't even begin to describe the cocktail of emotions dancing in Minho's eyes, when Minho opens his mouth and sighs into the silence between them something that momentarily blinds and deafens Jisung.

"Jisungie, can you fuck me?" The vulnerability in Minho's voice sends Jisung's heart into overdrive. He assumes this is not something Minho typically asks.

"You don't have to do anything," Minho continues, caressing Jisung's face, shifting his weight to straddle the younger's lap. "I can do

everything myself, I just want,” for the first time, Minhø’s ass, still clothed in his boxers, brushes against Jisung’s cock, and Jisung sees stars. “Want to feel you.”

Still half in a trance, Jisung moves his hands to Minhø’s hip, stroking the skin that partially disappears under the fabric of his underwear. “I want to do what I can,” he answers back, slowly but surely laying his back back on the mattress without realising it.

Minhø, looking like a divinity on top of him, gives him a small smirk. “You can watch,” he offers.

“Fuck,” Jisung can’t help but shudder under Minhø’s gaze. He’s not so sure he’s going to survive this.

“You can take this off,” Minhø says, snapping the waistband of his boxers against his soft stomach.

Jisung listens to him, stripping him off his underwear. Minhø rises on his knees to shuffle out of his boxers, but they stay curled around his left calf. Jisung thinks it’s stupidly hot, thinks about fucking Minhø with some of his clothes still hanging on his body, thinks about fucking him against his apartment door with his puffer jacket still on, with the muffler with kitten paws wrapped around his burning neck, thinks about placing kisses to the red skin, thinks about slipping his fingers inside his mouth when his cries get too loud, thinks about the dancer’s cum staining the door to Jisung’s apartment.

“What are you thinking about?” Minhø asks, noticing Jisung’s gone inside his head again.

“...you,” Jisung admits, leaving out all the unnecessary details.

“What about me?” Minhø presses him, the sparkle in his eyes unrelenting. He loosely wraps his hand around his cock, bringing Jisung’s attention to it. Minhø’s cock is fucking big, bigger than Jisung’s, it’s thick too, one prominent vein running down the right side of it, his tip wet and pink.

Minhø strokes his cock, his small hands looking almost foreign at it if it wasn’t for the protruding veins.

“...about fucking you,” Jisung finally says, watching Minhø pleasure himself.

Minhø bites his lip, eyelids heavy.

Jisung continues.

“Fucking you at the entrance door, m-maybe over the kitchen counter too,” all of Jisung’s blood is escaping his brain, pooling in his cock. He feels his cock fill up with the weight of the dancer’s ass against it.

“Fuck,” Minho whimpers. He circles his leaking tip, jerking his cock some more. “I’d let you,” he gets out in one breath.

“I know you would,” Jisung doesn’t know where the confidence comes from, maybe it’s Minho’s dishevelled state, maybe it’s him showing Jisung how he likes to get off, giving him a glimpse of something so private. Whatever it is, it makes Minho cry out, makes the tip of his cock shed pre-cum on Jisung’s stomach.

“Don’t think about it, do it,” Minho gasps, voice clipped. “Do you have... Do you have lube? I have a packet in my bag, but...”

“Yeah, under the-” Jisung sits up, to retrieve the bottle from under his pillow when he stops, processing exactly what Minho said. “You have a what in your bag?”

Minho’s blush darkens all over his body. He looks to the side.

“Hyung,” Jisung sits straighter. “You can’t just... say *that* and not explain.”

“I... When I’m frustrated... it helps me distress...”

“...What helps you distress?”

Minho holds his bottom lip under one of his bunny teeth to stop it from shaking. “...fingering myself,” he admits softly.

Jisung’s entire world fucking spins. Minho carries around lube to finger himself when he’s stressed. How exactly is he supposed to not go batshit crazy over that? Does this mean that... when he sat with him at the café yesterday, there was a lube packet in his sports bag? Does this mean he did that before going to the bar? Or... before leaving the dance practice? Oh fucking hell, has every Minho he’s ever met fingered himself in the morning? When he ran into him at the café, was it after Minho’s had his fingers up his ass?

He recalls the first time they only bumped into each other at the café. How Minho turned around with the curt ‘Excuse you’. Jisung tries to overlap the fantasy, or rather the reality of Minho stuffing his small

fingers inside himself, maybe inside his mouth too, trying to hold back his cries in the dance studio, with the stoic expression he gave Jisung before he had the chance to apologise for running into him.

Jisung blindly searches for the bottle of lube under his pillow.

“Show me,” he says, thrusting the bottle into Minhø’s hands.

Minho blinks at him, his mouth slightly opened in the sweetest mix of confusion and embarrassment.

“You said I could watch. I want to watch this,” Jisung explains.

Minho turns the plastic bottle in his hands like it’s a foreign object to him. Then he pushes against Jisung’s chest with his fingers, forcing him back down.

He pours some of the transparent liquid on his fingers, warming it up.

Jisung’s curiosity gets the best of him. “Have you... done it today?”

Minho slightly rises on his knees, his ass hovering above Jisung’s thighs.

“I couldn’t because you were there,” Minhø replies, he sounds a little annoyed, but his tip is still oozing so he probably doesn’t mind Jisung’s question that much.

“And if I weren’t then you would...”

Minho slaps Jisung’s shoulder with his clean hand. “I said you could watch, not interrogate me.”

“I’m just... musing out loud,” Jisung grins.

Minho just rolls his eyes, but Jisung notices how he suppresses a smile of his own. Then, he takes a deep breath. He clutches on Jisung’s shoulder when he brings his left hand to his entrance, circling it with his middle finger.

“Oh my god...” Jisung breathes out.

Minho rubs his fingertip over his hole a few times before he breaks through the resistance of his muscles, sinking it inside. His cock twitches.

“Fuck, does it feel good, hyung?” Jisung wants to know. “How long

has it been since you've lost done it?"

"Y-Yesterday," Minho says, surprisingly willing to answer for someone who was complaining about interrogation just a moment ago. "Because of your... stupid fucking track."

The idea of Minho on his bed, writhing on his fingers, muffling his noises against his pillow or sheets because of something Jisung's created steals away Jisung's breath.

Minho's brows crease when he pushes in a second finger. Jisung sees lube dripping from between his strong thighs. Minho twists his fingers, pushes them apart, his mouth falling open with a silent gasp.

"Baby," Jisung pants, pawing at Minho's thighs. The dancer shakes. "I want to hear you, please."

Minho brings his hips up and back down, riding his fingers. He makes a small sound in the back of his throat, but it doesn't sound too pleasurable, rather flustered if anything. Jisung quickly realises that the frown on his face is not the good kind either.

Alarmed, he rises on his elbows. He hopes Minho's not forcing himself to do this. Jisung has tried to finger himself maybe twice in total, he doesn't really know how long it takes to get used to it back again, to make it so it doesn't hurt. Maybe one day since he stretched himself is a long time.

"Minho? Are you—"

"They're too short," Minho snuffles, whatever Jisung wanted to say next stays stuck in his throat. "In this angle... I can't," he wiggles his fingers out, wiping them against his thigh.

Jisung wants to coo at him, but he understands it wouldn't be a good look, not when Minho's clearly not amused, it doesn't matter how devastatingly endearing Jisung finds it.

"I can help you?" He offers, dipping his finger past the edge of Minho's mouth. "You liked my fingers here, right?"

It looks like Minho's mouth might be his weakest spot because he immediately nods, all fight and emotional disturbance gone from his eyes, replaced with something gooey and malleable.

Jisung pats around the mattress, looking for the abandoned bottle of

lube. He pours a generous amount on his fingers. He doesn't think they are that much bigger than Minho's, but he'll be damned if he doesn't try his best to make the beautiful dancer feel as good as he's made him feel.

Jisung places his left hand in the middle of Minho's back, bringing his chest flush with his own.

"R-Relax," he says, ironically feeling nervous himself.

He warms the cold lube between his fingertips, sliding his hand down Minho's smooth ass cheek towards his puckered entrance.

"Hannie..." Minho exhales against his neck in anticipation.

Jisung breathes in, holding his breath when he breaches Minho's hole, feeling the tight muscles part around the intrusion.

"...Good?" he asks, beginning to ease his finger in and out of the impossibly warm velvety heat.

He feels Minho nod against his shoulder.

"You can... add another," Minho requests, shy.

Jisung listens to him, bringing his pointer finger to his entrance, easing it inside with a little more resistance from Minho's body.

He can't believe he's two fingers deep in him. Experimentally, he crooks them, brushing his fingertips over Minho's plush walls.

Minho's thighs clench around Jisung's legs, rendering him practically unable to move. He doesn't think about moving anyway with Minho panting next to his ear, his insides fluttering around Jisung's fingers.

"S-Stretch me," desperate, Minho begs. "For your cock. Stretch me for your cock," it's a miracle he strings the sentence together with how thin his voice has become.

"Fuck, okay," recalling what Minho's been doing to himself, Jisung pushes his fingers apart, forcing Minho's insides to adjust to the stretch from both sides.

Amazed with Minho's body accommodating the demands of his fingers, Jisung asks. "Can you take three?"

"Yeah, *yeah*," Minho answers, his voice jumping up a whole octave

between the two syllables.

Jisung exhales in Minho's hair, his eyes rolling up when his ring finger disappears inside the dancer's supple flesh too.

"Fuck, Sungie, deeper, push deeper," Minho demands, clutching Jisung's shoulders.

"L-Like this?"

"Just like that, *fuck*," Minho clenches around him but Jisung doesn't let it stop him, moving his fingers like Minho's instructed.

When he thinks Minho's stretched enough, he brings his fingers together to thrust them in and out, essentially fucking Minho with them before he can do the same with his cock. He hits a small bump inside Minho's body, like thicker muscle tissue. Thinking he'll be able to push through it just like with the rest of Minho's walls, Jisung stabs his fingers right against it.

The sound that flies out of Minho's throat has Jisung worried that his neighbours might come knocking at his door.

"Fuck, Jisungie!" Minho sobs, his back arching so violently Jisung hears his spine crack.

He feels something wet on his shoulder and when he tilts his head to look, he sees Minho's honest-to-God drooling there, as if he's physically incapable of closing his mouth, of keeping the thick saliva inside.

"...Here?" He rubs over the bump. He wonders if he can reach it with his cock too. If it could provoke an even more visceral reaction in Minho.

"T...there," Minho confirms, his hands scrambling between his legs to catch hold of Jisung's wrist. "S-Stop," he begs, out of breath, his grip on Jisung's wrist nowhere near as strong as it normally is.

It strokes Jisung's ego, knowing he's weakened Minho like this with nothing but a few touches.

"I want to cum with you inside me," Minho gasps.

Jisung chokes on his spit. Completely defenceless at what's just left Minho's lips, he allows him to pull on his wrist with what little

strength he has left, Jisung's fingers forced to retreat from his hole.

Minho shakes through the new feeling of emptiness and then he smiles at Jisung, that little mischievous crooked smile Jisung's grown familiar with.

"Do you want that, Jisungie? Want to feel me around you?" He asks, eyes never leaving Jisung's while he retrieves the bottle of lube lying haphazardly in the sheets.

"Yes, please," Jisung sighs like a prayer, stroking at the juncture of Minho's hip and thigh. "Want... Want to fuck you," he says.

Minho shudders. He squeezes lube over Jisung's cock, making him hiss through his teeth when the cold liquid comes pouring down his pulsing shaft.

"Baby," Jisung groans, biting his lip. "Shit."

Minho begins spreading the gelly formula around Jisung's cock thoroughly with both hands.

"You're so hard," the dancer exhales, stroking him painfully slowly. Sliding his hand down, he pulls Jisung's foreskin back so his angry-red tip pokes out only for Minho to caress it with his soft fingertips. "I want to ride you until I forget my name."

Jisung digs his nails into Minho's thighs. Minho hisses.

"I want that too," Jisung confesses, voice breaking.

Minho twists his small hand around Jisung's cock some more, every motion sending cramps through Jisung's legs. In the back of his mind, he's worried he's going to blow the second Minho's entrance ghosts over his tip.

Minho lets go of him. Jisung breathes a sigh of relief when his cock slaps against his toned stomach.

"You're going to have to hold it for me," Minho giggles, poking one finger around Jisung's base.

Jisung circles his girth, disappointed at having to let go of Minho's thigh. Groaning in his throat, he positions his cock, so it stands at a ninety-degree angle.

His breath inevitably quickens when he sees Minho rise on his knees,

the muscles in his legs hardening. Minho supports his weight with his hands on each side in the sheets, lightly clutching them between his fingers.

“I’m clean,” he whispers, his ass hovering just above Jisung’s tip, crying pre-cum nonstop. “So if you don’t mind...”

For a split second, Jisung can’t make sense of what Minho means. He looks at the dancer flushed above him, feels the faintest brush of his gaping entrance, looks at his bare dick, and it sinks in.

“Fuck, of course I don’t mind,” he reassures Minho, searching for his shyly averted eyes. He slides his hands higher towards his groin, rubbing the quivering skin there. “I want to feel you so badly.”

Minho gives a small smile, eyes crinkling.

Jisung feels Minho’s fleeting touch brush against the hand he’s holding his thigh with. Minho’s fingers reluctantly dip and then slide between Jisung’s in silent question. Jisung forces his heart to not ram straight out of his ribcage and his eyes not to water, and he carefully intertwines their hands, feeling Minho’s shake.

“Ready?” Minho breathes.

Jisung nods, jittery. “A-And you?”

“Have been since you said you forgot your laptop at home,” Minho eases the atmosphere. Jisung couldn’t be more grateful. “Guess your plan worked, huh?”

“Guess it did,” Jisung smiles back.

Minho doesn’t say anything else, he just squeezes their intertwined fingers tighter, and then, parting his ridiculously thick thighs, begins sinking down on Jisung’s length.

Jisung swears to God his heart stops beating, his lungs stop working. He wants to keep his eyes open, wants to watch Minho like this, wants to see as they become one, but he simply can’t. His eyelids squeeze shut against the onslaught of pure unadulterated pleasure; he’s pretty sure a few tears slip down his cheeks as well.

“God, Minho, fuck,” he groans. “What the fuck,”

“Hannie,” Minho touches his thumb under Jisung’s eyes, probably

catching the stray tears. “Okay?”

Jisung unglues his eyes, nearly having a heart attack all over again. The crimson colour seems to be permanently etched on Minho’s cheeks, his eyes half-lidded, glossy, some of his orange hair is stuck to his forehead with sweat.

“I just... I think I just went to heaven for a minute there,” Jisung whines, meaning every word.

Minho chuckles. “I haven’t even started yet,” he says still gently stroking under Jisung’s lash line.

Jisung throws his head back, hiding his eyes with his arm. “I’m doomed,” he cries, plaintive.

Now that Minho’s staying still, Jisung peeks at him from under his elbow.

Minho’s body’s just... it’s not meant for mortal eyes, Jisung’s pretty sure. His shoulders are broad, his visible collar bones dipping to a defined chest with perky nipples. His stomach soft, dare Jisung say a little pudgy here and there, it makes him regret not taking his time exploring Minho more, he would love to bite into the plump skin, he wonders if Minho likes being bitten. There’s also a near faded scar on Minho’s belly but Jisung doesn’t think it’s his place to ask about it.

“Can I,” Minho interrupts his musings. “Go lower?”

And sure enough, Jisung sees Minho’s only sunk half-down on his cock. He honestly doesn’t know what to expect once he feels Minho’s warmth enveloping him entirely, but he desperately wants to find out what it’s like.

“Y-Yeah, please,” he subconsciously tightens his hold on Minho’s hand.

Minho spreads his legs, sinking lower, pushing Jisung’s dick deeper down his walls. The deeper Jisung’s tip nestles, the warmer Minho’s body feels.

Jisung sees him holding his breath, his lungs inflating and deflating with how his strong chest puffs up and flattens again.

“J-Jisungie,” Minho mews, probably trying to keep quiet.

Jisung's cock twitches at that and it makes Minho gasp, look for purchase with his hand in the sheets.

"Minho," Jisung echoes as he watches Minho's ass finally sit flush in his lap.

Minho throws his head back, his Adam's apple bobbing in his throat, the veins in his arms jutting out. Jisung's absolutely fucking mesmerised at the sight.

"Baby, you're so fucking beautiful it's unreal," Jisung pants, any inhibitions forgotten.

Minho quivers on top of him. He tilts his head back down, his hair flopping all over the place. "Say that," he gulps. "Again, H-Hannie,"

"You're so fucking beautiful," Jisung repeats like a broken record.

Minho shakes his head, he intertwines his left hand with Jisung's right too, so they are connected as much as possible, save for their lips. "The... before,"

Jisung replays what he's just said.

"...Baby?" he guesses, and Minho doesn't have to respond verbally because the vibrations that run through his entire body and the way he tightens around Jisung is answer enough.

Minho slowly rolls his hips forward and back again. He makes it look so fucking sinful, everything above his waist remains practically motionless, like the muscles are completely isolated from the ones he's using now. It reminds Jisung of watching him dance.

"Fuck, baby, do you like it?" Jisung babbles, squeezing Minho's hands for grounding. "Do you like it when I call you baby?"

Minho nods. "I like it," he whimpers. "I like it, baby," Jisung can't stop his hips from kicking up, though they don't get far with Minho's thighs weighing them down.

"What else," Jisung pants. "What else do you like?"

Minho smirks down at him, circling his hips on Jisung's cock, taking his time so he can feel every fucking inch of Jisung, and Jisung every fucking inch of him.

"Your cock," he whispers, the red at the tips of his ears darkening.

“Like your cock so much,” Minho barely gets out before his words break into a moan.

He begins swaying his hips with more urgency, clutching on Jisung’s hands. His cock hanging heavy, untouched but rock hard, clear liquid from his tip pooling at Jisung’s stomach.

Jisung loves holding hands with Minho but he’s honestly going crazy at the physical need to touch him, run his hands over his body, feel the muscles tense beneath the thin layer of his golden skin.

“Sungie,” Minho moans, short of breath. He takes to bouncing on Jisung, his cockhead nearly slipping out each time Minho brings himself up, and then burying so deep inside him when he slams his ass back down.

“Baby, I-I want to touch you,” Jisung pleads. “Can I?”

“F-Fuck. Yeah, touch me,” Minho agrees easily. He grips Jisung’s knees, giving his hands free access to wherever they want to go.

Minho rises on his knees, pushing his hips forward, forward, consequently throwing his head back and bending his back in a perfect arch. He fucks himself back on Jisung’s cock like that, hips swinging, torso staying practically still except for the slight bounce of his pecks.

“God, you’re insane,” Jisung wails at the display right in front of him, Minho’s thick cock bouncing up and down between his legs. Jisung considers touching it for a moment, jerking Minho off, but he honestly likes that he’s this hard without Jisung having to touch him there.

He reaches his hands to Minho’s chest to rub over his nipples instead.

If possible, Minho’s back arches even more, goosebumps rising on his arms and legs.

“You’re so sensitive here,” Jisung thinks out loud, pinching the pink nubs with his fingers. “Where else?”

When Jisung looks at Minho’s face, he sees he’s rendered speechless. His mouth slack, drool dribbling out, dripping down his collarbones, his pecks. Jisung wants to stuff Minho’s mouth with his fingers, but he’s concerned it could cause some serious malfunction in the dancer.

He notices just now that Minho’s no longer moving, his thighs

quaking, convulsing, as if he can hardly hold himself up anymore, let alone move again.

With an indulgent slap, Jisung grabs a handful of both Minhø's thighs, kneading the skin there.

"Han-ah!" Minhø collapses against Jisung's chest.

Suddenly, Jisung has him panting almost right next to his ear. Minhø's breathing is laboured, he is trying to inhale as much air as possible, practically wheezing from time to time like he's on the verge of tears.

Jisung wants to bring him to tears.

"Come on, baby" he chastises, spanking Minhø's thighs again. The dancer's breath hitches against Jisung's neck. "Move," Jisung nudges.

Minhø snuffles, but he listens, shifting his weight properly to his knees. He drags his ass up on Jisung's dick, Jisung sees the globes of his asscheeks poke above his lower back, but all his attention is focused on the intense tremors vibrating through his fingertips from beneath Minhø's skin.

It doesn't take long – like two other desperate attempts at riding Jisung's cock – before Minhø slumps on top of the younger, his breathing so heavy it's a little alarming.

"Can't," he hiccups, nuzzling his face against Jisung's neck. "I can't anymore, Hannie, 'm sorry, tired..."

The last thing Minhø needs to do is apologise. Jisung feels so fucking fond, thinks there's nothing more endearing in the world than Minhø, with his incredibly strong body, curling on top of him, complaining he's too exhausted. Is he like this with other people too, Jisung ponders. Or is it maybe the bone-deep weariness from how he's been over-working himself with the choreography? Jisung recalls he's heard Minhø's joints crack several times today, after all.

Whatever it is, Jisung wants to take care of it. Take care of the trembling man in his arms.

He presses a kiss to Minhø's hair, wrapping his arms around his waist.

"Hyung," he whispers in Minhø's ear. Minhø makes a little sound to show him he's listening. "Can I fuck you now?"

Minho whimpers, clutching at Jisung's shoulders with his small hands.

He nods two, three times.

Jisung brushes a stray strand of hair behind Minho's ear.

"I... need words, baby," he breathes in Minho's ear, running his fingers through his damp hair.

Minho lifts his head, his dark, watery gaze boring into Jisung's eyes. His cheeks are wet, but Jisung's not sure if it's sweat or tears, he gently wipes it away anyway.

"You can fuck me, Jisungie," Minho says right in front of Jisung's lips. He presses a quick kiss to them. "Please, need you."

Jisung curses under his breath and, with strength he didn't know he possessed, flips them around while they are still connected.

Minho gasps in surprise when his back hits the soft sheets. His hair fanning around his head like a halo.

"Hi," Minho smiles when their eyes meet, his slightly opened mouth looking more enticing than ever.

Jisung leans over him to connect their lips in a quiet kiss. "Hi," he reciprocates, kissing the mole on Minho's nose as well.

Minho's hands travel from Jisung's shoulders across his chest to his defined stomach, pawing at it.

"Your abs are so hot," he praises, now sliding his hand over Jisung's arms back up. "And your arms too."

Jisung feels himself blush. "Don't let my hyungs hear that," he chuckles, experimentally flexing his biceps under Minho's fingers. "They won't let me out of the gym at all."

"That's okay," Minho hums, massaging Jisung's muscles. "I don't mind fucking at the gym," he says casually. Jisung cock twitches inside him. "And neither do you apparently," Minho raises his brow, a smile tugging at his lips.

Jisung whines, placing his hands on Minho's hips to tug him closer. "You're a menace," he says, states a fact really.

Minho smirks at him, he lifts his feet from the sheets, leaving his legs

to dangle in the air. It pushes Jisung a little deeper inside him and they both exhale at the feeling.

“Maybe you should fuck it out of me then,” Minho challenges, voice airy.

“Maybe I should,” Jisung answers, making himself comfortable between Minho’s legs. “Maybe I will.”

He tests Minho’s flexibility, pushing his hands against the inside of his thighs. Minho’s body folds how Jisung wants it to, his ass only half lying on the bed.

Jisung digs his toes in the sheets for purchase.

“Fuck, Minho,” he moans above him, close to sobbing.

It’s overwhelming, Minho’s heat enveloping him. He feels his own cock pulsing inside it. Needs a second to rearrange his breathing, though it’s probably futile.

Minho’s hands frame Jisung’s face. Jisung’s eyes automatically flutter open. Their faces are a lot closer than he expected.

Minho’s eyes say everything his mouth can’t. Jisung pushes deeper inside him, watching the dancer’s mouth fall more open with every inch he feeds him, at least when he’s not blinded by the all-consuming sensation, Minho’s small hands the only thing keeping him from trashing his head around left and right.

Jisung hasn’t even thrust inside him once, and he already feels so fucking overwhelmed, like breaking apart.

“S-Sorry,” he squeaks out. God, he must look pathetic in front of the dancer, his promises of fucking Minho nothing but empty words.

“No, no,” Minho shakes his head. Jisung forces his eyes open to look at him, he ignores the teardrop, most certainly his, that shatters against Minho’s cheek. “You’re doing so good, Jisungie,” Minho reassures him, stroking his thumbs across Jisung’s cheeks. “It’s a lot?”

Jisung nods, sniffing like an idiot.

“It’s okay,” Jisung thinks this might be his favourite phrase from Minho’s lips. His soft, gentle voice dyes it in something so special. “It’s okay, you can move slowly,”

“I-I want it to be good... for you,” Jisung complains, embarrassed at his inability to perform at least partially as good as he boasted he would.

“I feel amazing,” Minho encourages. “You’re making me feel amazing, Hannie.”

Jisung can’t suppress the sob when Minho runs his fingers through the mess of his hair.

“Slowly, okay?” Minho whispers, almost too quietly for Jisung to hear.

Jisung tries to listen to Minho, and for the few first thrusts he actually manages it, or rather he can’t do anything else. The push and pull of Minho’s walls against his length as he hesitantly drags it in and out strips him of the ability to move in general.

But soon enough, his rhythm gradually starts to build and Jisung has no control over it. The first time he realises he’s been nailing Minho’s insides harder than he should, is when he hears the dancer’s voice enter a register he hasn’t heard yet; pitched high and thin but still loud enough to reverberate through Jisung’s empty apartment.

“Sungie- *oh*, Sungie, fuck!” Minho’s crying out on his cock, his hands have moved from Jisung’s face to cling to the headboard; it bangs against the wall whenever Jisung slams back inside him.

The old strings in his mattress creak, Minho’s breath syncing with their rhythm, it makes Jisung’s head spin.

He feels his thrusts turn sloppy, uncoordinated, but he can’t do anything with it.

He caves in on top of Minho, the only thing keeping him from crushing him is his elbows and knees holding him somewhat up. He grips the sheets with his hands.

“Sorry, fuck, sorry,” he apologises again, breathing laboured, his hips hammering inside the tight heat quicker and quicker, the knot in his belly tightening at an alarming pace. “M-Minho, I’m gonna cum,“

Minho urgently nods. It’s like he wants to look Jisung in the eye, but his eye-sight has been dissolved with his body being jostled all around that he can’t.

“Inside,” he begs, his hand settling against his abdomen like he wants

to fucking feel Jisung there. "I-I'll cum too, like that," he admits.

Jisung sees fucking red. He harshly grabs Minho's hips, mercilessly impaling him on his cock, thankful for the hours at the gym after all. There is squelching every time his groin slams flush with Minho's ass, his balls slapping against the soft, no doubt reddened, and maybe bruised skin.

"I'm so *fucking* close," Jisung barks out, not recognising his voice. "Gonna cum inside you, baby, fuck, *fuck*-"

Minho sobs, curling his hand against his tummy. "I want to- want to keep a piece of you," he chokes. "Inside me,"

And the unbearable pressure in Jisung's entire body finally snaps, a near animalistic sound breaking free from his throat as he feels his cock spurt ropes of cum inside Minho, his hips stuttering, it seems nearly endless. Relief in its purest form flows through Jisung's veins, paralysing his muscles with the uncontrollable spasms of his climax.

He feels Minho clench around him so impossibly tightly it borders on painful, his oversensitive cock weeping some more.

"m cumming-" Minho gasps under him, desperate. He sounds almost scared.

Though Jisung's eyelids want nothing but to fall shut, he refuses to listen to them. He needs to see Minho tip over the edge, pushed over it by the feeling of Jisung's release, by what Jisung's done to his body, to him.

Minho loosely jerks his cock with his right hand, but he lets go of it right before he releases, his cum nearly reaching his collarbone. His face slack with pleasure; mouth lax, bunny teeth glistening with thickened saliva, drool fucking *gushing* out, leaving his chin completely wet, forming a wet patch in Jisung's sheets.

His legs wrapped around Jisung's waist, ankles interlocked at the small of his back, shake, his body jolts with irregular contractions a few times.

They are both catching their breaths, coming down from their highs, when Minho opens his eyes.

"You're staring," he laughs breathily, exhausted.

“W-Well what do you expect me to do when you look like this?”
Jisung defends himself.

Minho blinks, then he wipes off his chin, evaluates the state of the rest of his body, cum drying on his stomach, his cheeks wet, cock softening.

“Truly staring-worthy,” he chuckles ironically.

Jisung finally collapses on top of him, uncaring about the mess between them. He brushes his hands through Minho’s sweat-glued hair.

“Glad we can agree on that,” he says, kissing his damp chin.

“It’s gross,” Minho grumbles, trying to squirm away.

“It’s the hottest thing I’ve ever seen,” Jisung disagrees. “Do you drool when you jerk off too?”

Minho kicks him with his soles lightly.

“I’ll take that as a yes then.”

“Han Jisung!”

“Sorry, sorry,” Jisung placates him, his laugh rumbling through his skin, fingers stroking Minho’s hip.

Minho circles his arms behind Jisung’s neck. “And do you cry when you fuck your fist too?”

“Ouch,” Jisung hisses. He can’t stay mad when Minho starts giggling in his shoulder, though. “Not fair, this was my first time fucking anything else,” he says in his defence.

“Hope I measure up,” Minho pipes up.

“More than that,” Jisung exhales, nothing but honest.

Minho huffs a laugh at that and Jisung whines at him to stop making fun of him and Minho accuses him of accusing him of making fun of him. They fall into a fit of laughter against each other’s napes, both their heads probably still too floaty to consider they look like idiots. That, or they simply don’t care. There’s no one else to see them after all, no one else to disturb the peaceful silence in which only their snickers echo.

Eventually, they will have to disconnect their bodies, they will have to get up, take a shower, or at least wipe down whatever liquids are left drying on their skin. Eventually, they will do that, but for now, they just stay curled up, with their legs entangled, their minds blissfully blank and empty, existing only now without care what will happen in five minutes, let alone come tomorrow.



The dread comes back without notice. With Minhø unsuspecting, softly breathing in Jisung's arms.

After they cleaned up – or rather after Minhø cleaned them up because Jisung's knees buckled the second he attempted to get up from the bed to retrieve towels from his bathroom – they've come back to bed, Minhø adorned with nothing but one of Jisung's oversized t-shirts, the hemline just about covering his naked ass when he brought Jisung a glass of water from the kitchen, demanding he hydrates at least a bit.

Having lied back down under the covers, they talked about seemingly nothing; Jisung's involuntary gym visits, the width of their shoulders, the size difference of their hands, the last crime fiction by some Japanese author Jisung's never heard of that Minhø's recently read, the main character in a manhwa Minhø's never heard of that Jisung's recently read, what types of music they listen to when they want to fall asleep and what type when they need to clean their apartments, whether or not the pipes behind their bathroom walls creak, how long has it been since they last washed their bed covers, Minhø's hapkido competitions, the pictures on their lock screens, if tea is better iced or warm, if cheesecake is better baked or unbaked.

Maybe, in the back of his mind, Jisung knew all this idle talk was just prolonging the inevitable, but even if he did, he didn't mind it. He would prolong it as much as possible, he would break every second he gets to spend with Minhø into individual frames, so it feels like it lasts longer.

Just when Jisung was in the middle of describing an episode of Planet Earth he rewatched a few days ago, Minhø's inhales and exhales fell into a regular rhythm against his shoulder. His eyes gently shut, long lashes resting against his cheeks, mouth parted. He's laid his head on his curled forearm, the other lightly curled somewhere next to his chest.

He looked so... innocent, so comfortable, so blissfully unaware, and Jisung hoped it could remain that way.

Now that Jisung's been left alone with nothing but his thoughts to keep him company, they've turned significantly grimmer. He desperately wants to chase them away, afraid they might seep inside the sleeping man next to him and taint his dreams.

Jisung didn't realise he'd started crying until he tasted the saltiness of his tears on his lip.

He doesn't want to cry, he doesn't want to tarnish the last remaining hours he has with Minho, but he can't help it, he can't hold his tears back precisely because he knows there are only a few hours left.

He tries to choke back his sobs as he wraps his arms around Minho's form, so strong yet so fragile. He presses his tearful face to the crown of Minho's head, muffling all the anguish there.

He clutches him as tightly as he can without disturbing his slumber. His body's shaking but he tries to will it to stop, succeeding only partially.

He doesn't know what's about to happen, doesn't know what's coming, doesn't know if he should be grateful that Minho will maybe sleep through it. His mind conjures up scenarios ranging from the murderer kicking down Jisung's apartment door, coming to tear Minho away from his arms to Minho sleepwalking and ending his own life by jumping from a window or shattering the mirror in Jisung's bathroom and slitting his wrists. He so desperately doesn't want to think about any of that, so desperately wants to go back to talking with Minho about the most mundane things, but his mind is filled with nothing but fucking dread, fucking pulsating with it and Jisung can't fight it, even though he so hopelessly wants to.

Maybe if he holds Minho close enough, tight enough, maybe then he won't disappear from his arms. Jisung doesn't know. Doesn't dare guess.

He doesn't know what time it is, all he sees is that the world is still dark outside of his window. He doesn't know at what hour the loop repeats, if there even is an hour like that, if it's always the same time. All he knows is that, no matter what, he won't close his eyes. He'll stay here with Minho. He'll do whatever it takes to save him, help him, though he's already failed so many times.

Cradling Minho asleep in his arms, letting his tears fall, gasping for
breath between choked-down sobs, Jisung prays the sun won't rise,
prays morning won't come.

The delicate breathing shattering against his nape
The delicate breathing shattering against his nape

gradually thins out, until it stops completely.
gradually thins out, until it stops completely.

This time, there is no blood,
This time, there is no blood,

his face is not creased with pain either,
his face is not creased with pain either,

there are no painful cries, no pleads
there are no painful cries, no pleads

he doesn't have a reason to cry or plead
he doesn't have a reason to cry or plead

because he doesn't know about it,
because he doesn't know about it,

doesn't know about his heartbeat stopping.
doesn't know about his heartbeat stopping.

He doesn't feel Jisung's fingers on his shoulders
He doesn't feel Jisung's fingers on his shoulders,

doesn't feel him shaking him awake in vain;
doesn't feel shaking him awake in vain,

he won't wake up anymore.
he won't wake up anymore.

Jisung screams himself hoarse,
Jisung screams himself hoarse,

gripping him tightly in his arms,
gripping him tightly in his arms,

so tight his nails leave crescent on his arms.
so tight his nails leave crescent on his arms.

"Please,"

"Please,"

"Help me, Minho,"

"Help me, Minho,"

Cradling Minho asleep in his arms,

Cradling Minho asleep in his arms,

letting his tears fall,

letting his tears fall,

gasping for breath between choked-down sobs,

gasping for breath between choked-down sobs,

Jisung prays the day repeats itself,

because now he knows what he has to do,

what he must not do.



The first thing Jisung feels when he wakes up – or when his eyes open to this version of reality, he really doesn't know anymore – is the crust of tears that have dried on his cheeks. He didn't think it possible, always thought he can't cry so much that he has no tears left, but he's been proven wrong.

As he exhaustedly blinks up at the ceiling of his bedroom, he feels as if there's nothing heavier in the world than his eyelids, forcing his eyes closed again. Or maybe it's not entirely their fault. Maybe his mind is to blame, too. Maybe it tries to tell him to not even bother getting up, not even waking up, because it's simply not worth it. And in a way, Jisung's thankful he can stay shut inside his apartment, but then he gets inevitably reminded of why he *must* stay shut inside his apartment, and his heart painfully squeezes.

He doesn't have to check his phone to know it's Thursday again, it's October 12 again. He doesn't have to look at the other side of the bed to know it's empty, that Mi- that *he* is no longer there, that, in theory, he never was there to begin with. But Jisung does it anyway.

He forces his impossibly cumbersome head to turn to the side, feels something like a hysterical laugh or tearless sobs bubble in his throat when he sees the sheets are vacant, except for his own body, perfectly

pinned there with grief that shouldn't exist, that, in this October 12, doesn't make sense, but that to him is, ironically, the only real thing here.

Truth be told, Jisung doesn't know if he saw Mi- if he saw him die in some sort of a projection the way he most likely did all the other times before, or if he witnessed it in person, if he was there. If this Jisung that is lying on his bed right now is the same one who held him in his arms and begged for a fourth chance when it finally sunk in that he's been the reason all along.

He's actually thought about it multiple times each loop, referred to himself as the source of Min- of his problems. He just wrongly assumed he should play an active role in helping him.

But it makes perfect sense, doesn't it? If something causes you problems, if something causes you pain over and over again what do you do with it? At first, maybe you try and resolve it by approaching it. Maybe you try that three times even. But in the end, you get rid of it. You never allow it in your life again.

Forgetting, however, is difficult. It's difficult to forget someone who's made him feel so at home, someone who's altered his life forever, someone who was and will forever be, at least in Jisung's head, his first for so many things. Fuck, all of that over the span of a few days, or maybe only one day if he thinks about it.

His head wants to replay him every moment they spent together, his heart wants to beat with every emotion he made him feel, and his eyes want to tear up with every goodbye he hasn't said, with everything he hurt him with. But Jisung doesn't allow it.

His body burns with the urgency to run. To run around the apartment and make sure he really is not there, to run to the university and find him there, to run wherever he might be, but Jisung doesn't allow that either. He doesn't allow himself to even think of his face, of his name, afraid the ill-fated connection between them could somehow activate again.

Does he know for certain that this time it will work? No. There's no way he could. Of course he's fucking terrified with the idea that while he'd be lying on his bed unable to function, he could die again or could be murdered again, while Jisung does nothing. And what even is good enough that he would consider it 'working'? How does he know that if it 'works' he doesn't wake up into an October 13 where

M- where he is no longer alive? There's no fucking way he could know

It's thoughts like these that torture him the entire day. That make him shed tears he thought he no longer had when the sun sets. That make him cling to his pillow, silent screams trapped in his throat.

He doesn't get out of his bed. He doesn't drink, doesn't eat, doesn't take his pills, doesn't check his phone whenever it beeps with a new message. He doesn't count minutes, doesn't count hours, doesn't pay attention to time. He doesn't think about him, doesn't think about whether or not his morning is still shitty, doesn't think about what he's doing in the afternoon, doesn't think about how he's going to spend his night. Doesn't think about him. Doesn't think about them.

And when his eyes fall shut with fatigue, for the first time in five nights, he doesn't see anything.



"There he is, late as always!" Jisung can hear Changbin's strong voice all the way from the tables further in the back of the campus café, when he's trying and failing to get the bottle with the disinfection at the entrance door to actually pump some into his hands.

Chan no doubt says something back, probably chastises Changbin to quiet down and be more considerate of Jisung's drunk ass from last night and hangover ass from today's morning, but his voice doesn't reach the levels that Changbin's does so Jisung doesn't hear his reply.

He's not entirely sure what Chan wants to achieve in – he quickly checks his phone – 20 minutes since, while his hyungs maybe don't have classes to attend, Jisung's first Friday class starts at 10:20. But since he has to come to the university anyway if he doesn't want to fail the class by being absent more than 3 times, he doesn't really mind coming to the café to discuss their track.

He balances both his laptop and his hoodie – that he had to take off because the weather has apparently decided to go crazy warm in the middle of October – while he rubs his palms together to spread the disinfection.

He doesn't remember how much he had to drink last night and the way he got home is kind of a blur too but he's just grateful he woke up in his bed and on time, though his head still feels like someone's pierced it with a glass shard. Jisung used to think the worst part about waking up hangover was the dry patches left in his mouth, but he

might honestly change it to the absolute blanks he's drawing regarding the events of last night. He remembers they went to a bar, fought about the track but came to the conclusion they have to do something about it whether they like it or not, but other than that... nothing much.

Well, maybe it's for the better. Or maybe his hyungs, namely Changbin, will gladly remind him just how embarrassing he was last night.

Speaking of the dry patches in his mouth, he could definitely use something to drink other than the glass of water he's washed down his pills with in the morning.

"Hi guys," Jisung greets his friends. Chan's sitting at the table, fiddling with something on his laptop, Changbin's on his feet, his face a mixture of pissed-off and amused. "Sorry for being late," Jisung dutifully says, resisting the urge to roll his eyes at his hyung. It's not his fault his toaster decided to burn the only piece of toast he had, and he had to buy breakfast at the convenience store instead.

"It's okay," Changbin answers but there's mischief in his voice. "I guess two, three hours at the gym tonight will suffice as an apology," he decides.

Jisung's face immediately morphs into pure betrayal. "I'm late by, like, five minutes at most!"

"Six!" Changbin shoots back.

"Hyung," Jisung whines loudly, turning his attention to Chan. "That's not fair, is it? Say something!"

Chan still seems preoccupied with whatever he's doing on his laptop, no doubt something track-related, but he makes a thinking noise in his throat.

"I guess two is enough, no?" he looks at Jisung and then at Changbin with the same questioning expression.

Betrayed right in the morning, what a start to the day.

"You're lucky Chan-hyung's got your back," Changbin settles on, nudging Jisung with his elbow.

Jisung just rolls his eyes.

“Whatever,” he whines again, knowing he’s lost this battle, and besides if Chan’s coming with them to the gym he won’t have to be there for the whole two hours anyway.

“I’m just gonna get something to drink,” Jisung announces, throwing his yellow hoodie over the backrest of the only empty chair left now that Changbin’s sat back down.

Just as he’s putting his backpack on the chair, ready to pull out his wallet from the back pocket, he notices a plastic cup of dark coffee sitting there. He would recognise an Americano anywhere.

“Hyung,” Jisung gasps in delight, looking at Chan, but Chan just silently shakes his head and nods towards Changbin who is stubbornly looking at his phone.

Jisung moves his backpack to the floor and sits down. “I guess two hours are okay,” he mumbles, taking a sip of his coffee. From the corner of his eye, he notices a small smile tug at Changbin’s lips.

“Alright,” Chan starts in his leader-voice, shifting his eyes from his laptop screen to the two of them. “So let’s see what we’re working with, yeah? I’ve already tried and made some changes, but I want to see if you guys have any suggestions.”

How in the world has Chan already made any changes is beyond Jisung when they came back to their respective apartments late at night, and drunk on top of that, but he’s not going to question it.

“I thought about changing that one pitchy part in the middle,” Changbin starts, pulling out his laptop from his backpack. Jisung follows his example, though he doesn’t have much to share because he’s just slept like a log the entire night and woke up just in time to not be too late.

“Oh yeah, like, make it lower?”

While Chan and Changbin dive into a conversation about the track, Jisung kind of tunes them out, occasionally sipping on his Americano, waiting for his laptop to load up.

He quickly types in his password, closes all the applications that open automatically despite him choosing in their settings that they don’t, and then double clicks on the shortcut for the audio program they use.

Unassuming, Jisung fills his cheeks with his coffee only to nearly

choke on it or spit it out when the program actually opens, and he comes face to face with completely different audio tracks than he remembers the last time he saw them when their professor suggested they change them.

“Woah, Jisung-ah, you okay?” Chan asks, concerned.

He just looks at Chan with widened eyes, not really able to put into words whatever’s in front of him.

“Come on, how many times have I told you to close your hentai when you finish watching it,” Changbin grumbles in mock annoyance, leaning closer to look at Jisung’s laptop screen.

“What the fuck?” – “Oh, wow.”

His hyungs exhale in unison when their eyes land on the completely reformed track Jisung doesn’t remember reforming at all.

They both look at him, surprise evident on their faces.

Jisung just shakes his head in panic. “I-I don’t know how-“

Changbin doesn’t let him finish, pressing the spacebar to play the track. He turns the volume down a bit, so it doesn’t blast through the entire café.

The music comes pouring out of his laptop speakers. The beginning is the same, but after that, the bass is much more prominent than it was before, there are some cuts here and there, the pitch’s been adjusted too, including the part in the middle that Changbin mentioned. It sounds like a very decent dance track, something you could definitely rock your body to, let the beat dictate the vibration of your muscles, but it still preserves something from the original rather sombre and slow track they originally submitted.

And, oddly enough, Jisung feels like he should be familiar with it, like this isn’t his first time hearing it, like he can actually picture a person dancing to it.

“Jisung-ah, what the fuck, this fucking rocks!” Changbin tears him away from whatever dreamland he accidentally went to.

“It’s really good!” Chan echoes. “We can make some little adjustments to it, and we can pretty much submit it, no? What do you guys think?”

Changbin enthusiastically nods. Jisung's still left dumbfounded, to say the least.

"You were working on this without telling us?" Changbin playfully punches Jisung's shoulder, but because it's Changbin it still kind of hurts and rocks him back and forth.

What the hell is Jisung supposed to say? And most importantly, how in the fuck does he have a wholly reformed track in his laptop? A track he didn't want to reform at all, at that. And why is the reformed version actually good? Why is it actually better than the one he was so adamant about not changing? Has he lost his mind? Does going to bed drunk awake some parallel version of him that makes bomb tracks overnight? Was he sleepwalking? Sleep-producing?

Jisung's eyes wander back to his laptop screen, his hyungs still playing around with the audio tracks, replaying the entire thing from different passages, when he notices his class is about to start in 5 minutes.

"Oh shit," he curses, already scrambling to throw his backpack back over his shoulder. "I have to run if I don't want the professor to kill me."

"Shit, you're right," Chan sighs, he'd be the one to remind Jisung to go earlier normally, but he's been probably too deep into the track to notice. "Can we meet in the afternoon and work on it a bit more? Ideally, send it to the professor by the evening?"

Changbin and Jisung both nod. Jisung doesn't have any plans anyway.

He's shutting his laptop, securing it in his arms along with his hoodie when Changbin pipes up. "But don't think you're getting out of the gym session!"

Jisung wants to stick his tongue out at him or something or maybe finally roll his eyes like he wanted at the beginning, but then he sees the half-drunkAmericano on the table, and he reconsiders.

"Can't wait, hyungie," he sing-songs in the fakest sweet voice he can manage.

Jisung narrowly avoids the punch Changbin threatens his way, though it makes him stumble over his feet a bit and nearly spill the rest of the coffee.

"Okay, guys, then, see you in the afternoon!" Jisung shouts over his

shoulder, running to the entrance door of the café.

The sun is shining through the colouring autumn leaves and there are almost no clouds in the sky, leaving it rarely crystal-blue for October. He still has a bit of coffee left and he's going to make it in time for class.

Maybe today's not so bad after all.



Jisung feels a little out of place because normally he would never willingly go to an event like this.

Correction, he would never willingly go to any sort of event, especially when it involves sitting in an audience with a lot of people and maybe even speaking on stage, though he hopes and believes Chan and Changbin will take over for him, or possibly their R&B Composition professor, this entire thing was his idea after all and had it not been for him Jisung wouldn't have to sit here and stress himself out over how he's going to make an absolute idiot of himself, how he's going to start hyperventilating here in the middle of the row and he will stumble over people, trying to go hide in the bathroom and-

"Jisung, everything okay?" Chan asks at his right, his palm gently covering Jisung's fidgety hands in his lap.

Jisung swallows past the lump in his throat, the suit he has on doesn't make him comfortable one bit because it constantly reminds him of the severity of this situation, the Christmas songs playing from the speakers on the wall and the Christmas decorations all around the place don't help either, but he's going to try and push through. He has his hyungs by his side. It's going to be okay.

He nods, trying to convince himself.

“J-Just nervous,” he admits, knowing Chan won’t judge him.

Chan gives him a small smile, rubbing his thumb along the back of Jisung’s hands. At least they are not shaking anymore. “We can leave, you know,” Chan offers. “We don’t have to be here-“

“No!” Jisung quickly jumps in, looking at his leader with alarmed eyes. “N-No, I... I want to see it,” to which Chan just says a little reassuring ‘okay’, turning his attention back to the still empty stage.

And Jisung’s not lying. He really wants to see, see what sort of dance their song has sparked.

It definitely came as a surprise, learning that the last track they submitted for their R&B Composition class was to be used as a choreography music for the Dance major End-of-year showcase. Their professor did mention there could be a collaboration between the Music major and the Dance major but probably no one expected it to be done in secret. Jisung’s still kind of mad about it because if he knew they were creating a track for a dance number, they could have avoided the whole misunderstanding with their song not meeting the requirements. But let bygones be bygones.

So it’s not that big of an event, really. Just within their university, especially within the two majors, but that doesn’t change anything about the fact that a large group of people, in fact, the largest so far, is about to listen to something Jisung produced. And, if he understands this correctly, the Dance major students will be graded based on their performance so what if the track sucks too much and they are unable to dance to it? Then it will be all Jisung’s fault, and at the end of the night they will have to go to the stage and say that yes, we are the ones responsible for the track the dancers couldn’t dance to and-

“Fucking hell, can you believe this?” Changbin starts complaining before he even reaches his seat, shuffling between all the people sitting, bowing to apologise to them. He’s coming back from his mission of getting them some food and drinks before the show starts. “Seventeen thousand Won for this teeny tiny plate of bulgogi, I would hope at least my own university wouldn’t try to rip me off,” he huffs, plopping down into his seat.

“You seriously got a plate of bulgogi to watch a performance??” Chan cackles.

“Well they’re selling it here, what was I supposed to do, walk by and not get some? Aish,” Changbin defends, rearranging everything he’s

got in his hands.

“Okay, so here’s your tea, hyung,” he says, handing Chan the steaming paper cup. “Coffee for our maknae,” he hands Jisung another cup, this one ice-cold because that’s how he takes his Americano. “And these are some crisps,” Changbin finishes listing off the items, passing the bag of crisps to Chan.

Chan offers some to Jisung and Jisung thinks fuck it and grabs a handful, maybe it will help him untie the knots in his stomach.

“So when is it supposed to start?” Changbin asks, mouth half-full with the bulgogi he’s bought.

Chan checks his phone. “In like two minutes,” he answers, stuffing his mouth. “I’m excited!” he happily wiggles in his seat and Jisung can’t help but smile a little at that.

“Can we record it?”

“Uh, I don’t think we-“

And then the lights in the room dim, the buzz around them quietening. Jisung squeezes the plastic cup with his coffee so tightly there is an audible scrunch and it’s a miracle that it doesn’t spill, heartbeat quickening in his chest and breath escaping him.

A beam of light illuminates the centre of the stage, and a rather petite person makes their way to it, accompanied by applause from the audience. Jisung claps too.

It’s a guy and he’s quite small, maybe even smaller than Jisung, at least in build. His hair is black, shoulder-length, mullet-y. He has some kind of silky dark shirt on with black jeans. When he looks up, he has this almost innocent beauty to him; his nose small, eyes kind and something like the beginnings of a smile on his lips, his nose and cheeks adorned with little freckles. Jisung thinks he hears Chan gasp next to him.

“Alright, good evening, everyone,” he says into the mic he’s come to the stage with, in such deep bass it elicits murmurs from the audience, the colour of his voice not matching his looks at all. The guy apparently expects as much because he breaks into an amused smile. It’s mesmerising.

“Thank you so much for coming to the Dance major End-of-year

showcase, we are all very grateful to have you here,” he says, bowing at the end. The audience responds with another round of applause.

“My name’s Lee Felix and I’m part of the first dance team you’ll see tonight. We’re called Danceracha, which” Jisung’s not sure if he’s heard correctly, he looks around in the dark at both his hyungs and finds them staring back, equally confused. “We kinda stole from the guys who made us the track so, if you guys are here tonight, we hope you don’t mind,” he presses his palms together in a little praying gesture.

Jisung’s still absorbing what he’s just heard. He allows himself to hope Felix and the rest of his team didn’t hate their track after all if they named their team after, well, *their* team.

“We don’t!” Changbin shouts from Jisung’s left, his hands a makeshift megaphone around his mouth.

The laugh bursts out of Jisung before he can stop it, Chan joins him almost right away, and before they know it the entire audience is buzzing with laughter.

Felix rises on his tiptoes, placing his head above his eyes as if he could really see them in the absolute dark.

“Okay, cool, thanks!” He settles on, showing a thumbs up, which all three of them show back.

“Aside from me, there are two other members in our team which I would like to introduce now,” Felix says, confirming his own words with a nod. “There’s Hwang Hyunjin, 2nd-year student at the Dance major,” he reaches his hand to the left side of the stage, Jisung only now notices there are two other people waiting below the small stairs that lead to the stage.

A guy who looks like he walked straight out of the front page of a high-end fashion brand magazine runs up the stairs to join Felix on the stage. He stumbles a bit but catches himself in time, climbing to the stage with an embarrassed laughter he tries to hide in his shoulder.

This time, there’s definitely an audible gasp that Jisung joins in, when the Hyunjin guy turns to face the audience to bow. He is not only tall and slim and with long dark hair and dressed like a supermodel, but his face is out-of-this-world beautiful. He has full lips, almost perfectly symmetrical features, his eyes look like they want to lure you in. He

looks like a sin personified, an absolute 180 from Felix's looks.

Hyunjin stands to Felix's left side, the spotlight seems to make his face glitter. Felix turns to him and claps with the audience.

"And then," Felix says when he's facing the audience again. "Last but not least, our – though he'll deny it if you ask him – dance leader, Lee Minhoo," Jisung feels goosebumps rise on his arms, he doesn't know why. "4th-year student at the Dance major," Felix again reaches his hand to the left, gesturing for the remaining member to come up on stage.

Jisung doesn't understand why, but as he watches the guy make his way onto the stage, he unknowingly holds his breath, his palms sweating. For some reason, he can't even hear the claps all around him, including the ones coming from his hands, as the world blurs, fades in and quietens, only the last dancer who's coming to join Felix and Hyunjin saturated.

As if time has been chopped up into individual frames, the dance leader with short black hair slowly turns his face to look at the audience, his head tilted.

He looks... no, he is abnormally beautiful.

The dark hair parted almost but not quite in the middle, frames his face – the perfect mixture of sharp and soft features. Some strands fall in his feline-like eyes. His eyes are dark brown, so dark they almost seem to absorb the light. When he blinks, his long lashes brush against his sharp cheekbones. His nose is sharp, lips set in a perfectly straight line, and somehow it makes Jisung heart's race with reluctant anticipation. The expression on his face is neutral, almost intimidating, except for a small upside-down smile that appears on his lips when he deeply bows to the audience.

He walks to Felix's right side; the light beam doesn't quite reach where he's standing so half of his face is hidden in shadows while the other is illuminated. It only adds to the mysterious almost cold aura around him, makes him look ethereal. Makes Jisung want to learn more about him.

Felix claps for this Minhoo guy the same way he did for Hyunjin and then he once again turns back to finish their introduction.

"We'll perform a song by 3RACHA," Jisung straightens his back when he hears the name of their track. He still can't take his eyes off Minhoo.

Can't believe he'll get to witness this gorgeous being perform something Jisung's participated in.

"We've put everything we have into this choreography, and we had a lot of fun preparing this number for you guys. We hope you like it, and, to our producers," Felix once again squints for them in the audience. "We hope we don't disappoint you, yeah?" He looks around at Hyunjin and Minho who just nod their heads, bashful smiles on their lips.

"Alright, this is Danceracha and 3RACHA. Let's go!" Felix finishes enthusiastically. He quickly runs backstage and comes back without the microphone.

All three dancers once again bow and, with applause from the audience, get in their position. Felix and Hyunjin remain standing while Minho gets on his knees in the centre. Jisung squeezes the armrests of his seat.

Minho's supporting himself on one crouched leg, the other, his left, perfectly stretched to the side. There's no doubt he can hold himself- he is probably holding himself in such a strainful position with his legs alone, but his fingers lightly touch the floor too.

With breath held back, Jisung listens to the melody of their song come pouring from the speakers around the room, sensing the trajectory of his life is about to change.

There's no point using words to describe what unfolds in front of Jisung's eyes with the first move that flows through Minho's body. He's like water, resonating with the music reverberating through the space. His limbs gracefully, weightlessly glide through the air along with the melody, the momentum seamlessly dissolving exactly where it needs to go, different parts of Minho's body move separately, and yet it looks like they are perfectly connected, in absolute sync, coming together as a whole.

Seeing Minho dance feels like... coming home. Like puzzle pieces coming together. All tension from Jisung's body flows away at the display of utter excellence he's allowed to witness. He has the decency to apologise to the other two dancers, at least mentally, but Minho's the one who's stolen his attention, his breath.

Jisung watches him dance and time escapes him, the reality escapes him, everything that is not Minho escapes him.

He realises the performance has come to an end only when people around him in the audience start standing up, roaring applause rumbling all around Jisung. He quickly climbs to his feet and claps just as enthusiastically, his palms burning from the friction.

Minho's face is split with a blinding smile that is a little lopsided and makes his eyes crinkle, it really accentuates the softness of his face, it suits him. Jisung kind of wants to slap his past self, who assumed the atmosphere around Minho was cold, now he sees it is nothing but warm.



Jisung can't bring himself to focus on the other dance numbers and judging by the fact that both Chan and Changbin are still leaning their heads left and right as if they are trying to catch a glimpse of something – or rather someone, if Jisung had to guess – near the stage, he's not the only one. His mind is still replaying Minho's performance and he honestly doesn't know if he should be mad that they couldn't record it, or grateful that he couldn't record it and got to experience it life without his phone screen distracting him.

He's so spaced out he barely remembers his own stage debut when they as 3RACHA have to get on the stage after all the dance performances have been finished and introduce themselves as the rightful producers of the first track. Embarrassingly enough, Jisung spends the entire time they are on stage looking around the room, hoping to catch a glimpse of the beautiful dance leader, but he doesn't. He remembers mumbling his own name into the microphone when Chan points it his way, and that's it.

And, well, he definitely remembers the applause they receive from the audience when Jisung is already ready to bolt out of the stage.

So, preoccupied with thoughts about Minho and with his anxiety coming back, Jisung is caught completely off guard by the resounding claps for their track, for them. He turns his head over his shoulder as if in a trance, goosebumps standing up all over his skin at the sight of people clapping for 3RACHA. He looks at Chan and Changbin for confirmation that he isn't dreaming this all up and sees them looking in the direction of the audience, astonished.

"Alright, how about we go get a drink somewhere? What do you guys say?" Chan asks them both once they've already stepped down from the stage, the room nowhere near as crowded now that people have

begun to leave.

“Add some meat to it and I’m all- Oh my *fucking* God, that’s them!” Changbin yell-whispers.

Before Jisung can turn around to see what he’s pointing to, he grabs both him and Chan by the backs of their necks, rotating them so they face the left side of the audience seats.

Jisung heart jumps to his throat, no, scratch that, nearly jumps out of his *fucking* mouth when he sees the three dancers there, Hyunjin and Felix in various stages of sitting or kneeling on the seats, and Minho standing, leaning over one of the backrests with his elbows resting against it.

They must have changed because they are all dressed much more casually now. They are probably about ready to leave too, or at least Minho is, he has a puffer jacket on a big black sports bag over his shoulder. Jisung notices a little yellow plush keychain hanging from the shoulder strap.

“Fuck,” Chan curses under his breath. “Should we... talk to them? Like, say the performance was fantastic or something...”

Jisung’s brows automatically furrow. He looks at Changbin and finds him already staring back, just as confused. Chan’s usually the first person who approaches strangers when they want to talk to someone, and he’s rarely ever – as in literally never – nervous about it. What the fuck is going on?

Chan looks back at the both of them, his face quickly colouring red. “W-What?” he stutters through a nervous chuckle.

Changbin’s lips stretch with a knowing smirk. Jisung’s still catching on.

“Funny you say that because we didn’t ask you anything...” Jisung murmurs with a scoff, just making an observation but it makes the blush on Chan’s cheeks darken.

“It’s the one with the freckles, right? Don’t be shy, hyungie,” Changbin teases, and Jisung’s finally starting to understand. So Chan really did gasp when he saw that guy’s face.

“It’s not like that!” Chan defends, though he’s not really been accused. “I mean, it’s... he said his name was Felix so maybe he’s also, you

know...”

Oh, now Jisung’s definitely sure he knows what’s this about.

“Yeah,” he breathes out, catching Chan’s shoulder in mock reassurance. He notices Changbin’s already got a hold of the other. “Maybe *he* could call you daddy, Chris.”

“Oh, fuck off!”

Jisung honestly pats himself on the back for not bursting out laughing until now.

He high-fives Changbin over Chan’s head. “Well I don’t know about that,” Changbin starts, redirecting their attention back to the three dancers. “But I’ll tell you one thing, the one with the long hair is my future spouse,” Jisung muffles another laugh in his shoulder, at least neither of his hyungs is interested in Minho, it looks like.

Fuck, now he feels his own cheeks colouring.

“Are you guys whispering about us?” A rather breathy voice shouts their way. Jisung raises his head and sees it’s the tall dancer with long hair, Hyunjin.

“How can we not when you’re so beautiful!” Changbin shouts back without missing a beat.

Jisung kind of wants the earth to open up and swallow him whole and he thinks Chan maybe feels the same way.

Hyunjin throws his head back, cackling, nearly falling off of the backrest he’s now sitting on. Jisung sees Minho reach out to catch him, but he manages to balance himself out without the leader having to interfere.

“Then come closer so we can hear you!” This time it’s Felix who addresses them.

“Isn’t the whole point of whispering not to be heard?” Chan points out and it puts an adorably confused expression on Felix’s face, like he really didn’t consider it until now.

Jisung can feel Chan relax at his side.

Felix delves into a discussion with Hyunjin, assumingly about what Chan has just said, and Minho seems to join in the discussion too.

For a while, Jisung stares at Minho, at his perfect side profile, at the balance in his body, at his small hands he's now placed on Hyunjin's and Felix's shoulders, swallowed up by the long sleeves of his jacket, at the yellow plush keychain dangling from his sports bag.

"Han-ah, you coming?" Jisung doesn't realise he's wandered off inside his head again when Chan addresses him.

He sees Changbin's already sweet-talking Hyunjin, if he were to assume from the way Hyunjin's giggling nonstop with his face dusted red, while Chan still hangs back to not leave Jisung alone, frozen in time while he reminiscences about Minho.

Jisung's not good at talking to people. He's terrible at approaching people he doesn't know. He doesn't know what sort of conversation to strike up with Minho. Should he praise his dancing? Maybe he's not the type who likes praises and maybe it's too boring of a starter, maybe it's too predictable. But he can't just walk up to him and blurt out how beautiful he is, how watching him dance has healed Jisung's soul, calmed down his nerves.

God, he doesn't know. But he does know he wants to talk to him. Wants to get to know him. Wants to learn more about him. See what else lies beneath the dance leader's exterior. Uncover the extent of the warmth he saw seep through his smile.

He gives a small nod at Chan's question, and takes one step forward, following the pull he can feel in his chest.

When else if not now?

Chapter End Notes

TWs:

Implied/mentioned suicide:

Stop reading at: "His mind conjures up scenarios ranging from",
start reading again at: "He so desperately doesn't want to think about any of that".

End Notes

Dear reader, thank you for finishing this fic. ♡

I would also like to thank my prompter, whoever they may be. Without you, I would never have come up with a theme like this on my own, and I immensely enjoyed writing this fic! I can hardly describe how inspired I felt immediately when I saw this prompt. I hope you understand the "artistic liberties" I have taken with this prompt and I hope it still meets your expectations.

Another thank you goes out to [my beta Chee](#) who helped me not only with the grammar and sentence structure but with coming up with the summary as well!

And lastly, a BIG thank you to the mods for organising this amazing event for us! 🐾📺🐰

I have a nsfw skiddles [twit](#) now if you want to talk!

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!